



**April 9, 2015**

PSBA Legislative Report

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*The General Assembly was not in session this week and will return to Harrisburg on Monday, April 13.*

### **Top Stories**

- \* **U.S. Senate Committee will begin mark-up of bipartisan agreement for ESEA reauthorization next week**
- \* **House Republicans to unveil tax reform plan**
- \* **Gov. Wolf nominates Timothy Reese for state treasurer**

### **Latest News**

- \* **PDE reminds districts of opt-out rules for state tests**
- \* **PSBA to address state budget proposal on television this Sunday**
- \* **On the Hill: Upcoming meetings**

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### **Top Stories**

#### **U.S. Senate Committee will begin mark-up of bipartisan agreement for ESEA reauthorization next week**

This week U.S. Senate education committee Chairman Lamar Alexander (R-Tenn.) and Ranking Member Patty Murray (D-Wash.) introduced legislation that is bipartisan agreement for reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), which includes the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). Consideration and mark-up of the bill, called the Every Child Achieves Act of 2015, is scheduled to begin next Tuesday, April 14 and could continue throughout the week.

*Among the provisions of the Every Child Achieves Act:*

- \* **Mandated testing:** Maintains annual testing in reading and math for students in grades 3- 8 and once in high school, as well as science tests given three times between grades 3 and 12. The bill includes a state-level cap of 1% on students with the most significant cognitive disabilities tested on the alternate academic achievement standards.

- \* **Accountability system:** Ends the federal test-based accountability system of NCLB and gives states the responsibility for determining how to use federally required tests for accountability purposes. States would

be able to determine the weight of those tests in their systems.

\* **Required reporting:** Maintains annual reporting of disaggregated data of groups of students, including low-income students, students of color, students with disabilities, and English learners.

\* **Grants for low-achieving schools:** Includes federal grants to states and school districts to help improve low performing schools that are identified by the state accountability systems. School districts will be responsible for designing evidence-based interventions for low performing schools.

\* **Academic standards:** Affirms that states decide what academic standards they will adopt. The federal government may not mandate or incentivize states to adopt or maintain any particular set of standards, including Common Core.

\* **Teacher development:** Provides resources to states and school districts to implement various activities to support teachers, principals, and other educators, including allowable uses of funds for high quality induction programs for new teachers, ongoing professional development opportunities for teachers, and programs to recruit new educators to the profession.

\* **Teacher evaluations:** Allows, but does not require, states to develop and implement teacher evaluation systems. This bill eliminates the definition of a highly qualified teacher and provides states with the opportunity to define this term.

\* **Charter school expansion:** Provides for grants to start or expand charter schools

For more details, click here for the [legislation](#) and here for a [summary](#) of the bill. PSBA will continue to report on the progress of the bill.

### **House Republicans to unveil tax reform plan**

This week House Majority Leader Dave Reed (R-Indiana) said that a group of about 30 Republican legislators have crafted a property tax plan that he hopes will soon be considered. During a conference call with reporters, Reed said that that plan would use sales tax and personal income tax to reduced property tax to allow dollar-for-dollar reductions in property tax. Money would not be designated for additional state spending. At this point, the plan does not completely eliminate property taxes, but Reed also noted that amendments will likely be offered that would adjust the proposal. The plan will differ from the plan sought by the governor, which would use funds from taxes to provide additional support for public schools.

### **Gov. Wolf nominates Timothy Reese for state treasurer**

This week Gov. Tom Wolf nominated Montgomery County businessman Timothy Reese for State Treasurer, filling the vacancy created in January following the resignation of Rob McCord.

Reese, 51, currently serves on the Board of Advisors for the U.S. Securities & Exchange Commission and brings more than 20 years of experience as a businessman and investor. In 2012, Reese launched the National Minority Angel Network to focus on investing in women, minority, and veteran-owned companies.

If confirmed by the Senate, he serve the remaining 18 months of McCord's term, and a new election will be held in 2016.

### **PDE reminds districts of opt-out rules for state tests**

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is reminding all public schools of the existing regulation regarding opting a child out of participation in the PSSA or Keystone Exams based upon a religious

objection.

Chapter 4 states that “School entities should adopt policies to ensure that parents or guardians have . . . the right to review a state assessment in the school entity during convenient hours for parents and guardians at least 2 weeks prior to their administration, to determine whether a State assessment conflicts with their religious belief. . . . If upon inspection of a State assessment parents or guardians find the assessment to be in conflict with their religious belief and wish their students to be excused from the assessment, the right of the parents or guardians will not be denied upon written request that states the objection to the applicable school district superintendent, charter school chief executive officer or AVTS director.” 22 Pa. Code 4.4(d)(4).

**For additional clarification, please see the Chapter 4 Guidance, Frequently Asked Questions posted at <http://www.pdesas.org/module/assessment/pages/keystone/>.** Additional questions concerning the opt-out provision should be directed to John Weiss at PDE at (717) 214 - 4394.

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## Latest News

### **PSBA to address state budget proposal on television this Sunday**

On Sunday, April 12, PSBA’s Senior Director of Government Affairs John Callahan will appear on the television program “Focus on Education” to discuss Gov. Wolf’s 2015-16 state education budget proposal. He will appear with Jim Buckheit, executive director of the PA Association of School Administrators (PASA). The program will air at 3:00 p.m. on the Pennsylvania Cable Network. “Focus on Education” is a monthly program produced by PCN and the Education Leadership and Policy Center (EPLC) that features topics in education.

### **On the Hill: Upcoming Meetings**

*Upcoming events currently scheduled include:*

#### **Tuesday, April 14**

\* The **House Finance Committee** will conduct a hearing on **House Bill 860** (Rep. Saylor, R-York), a tax reform plan that shifts the state’s Personal Income Tax rate from 3.07% to 3.70% , and the Sales and Use Tax rate from 6% to 7%. None of the new revenue would be kept in the state’s coffers for additional budgetary spending. Funds collected through these new rates would be distributed to school districts in two ways: new PIT revenue would be used to reduce local millage rates, while new revenue generated from the SUT would be directed specifically to homesteads and farmsteads. *As this report is sent, the text of House Bill 860 has not been released.*

#### **Wednesday, April 15**

\* The **House Education Committee** will consider [House Bill 156](#) (Rep. Truitt, R-Chester), which requires school districts to develop a comprehensive policy to define bullying, establish procedures for responding to and reporting it, and train school district employees; and [House Bill 848](#) (Rep. Boback, R-Luzerne), which requires school districts to include in their professional education plan include a program for annual training in bullying awareness, prevention and intervention and require professional educators to complete such annual training. *PSBA is concerned with the new mandates and specific procedures created by these proposals.*

\* The **Joint Legislative Budget and Finance Committee** will release a report on the feasibility of alternative methods of authorizing charter schools.

\* The **Senate Finance Committee** will conduct a hearing on pension plan design proposals.

**Monday, April 27**

\* The **Basic Education Funding Commission** will conduct a hearing on funding issues at the University of Pittsburgh.

**Tuesday, April 28**

\* The **House Education Select Subcommittee on Technical Education and Career Readiness** will conduct its first hearing that will focus on recommendations for improving career training programs. *PSBA will be presenting testimony at the meeting.*