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2014 General Assembly **K-12 Education Update**

February 28, 2014

The 2014 General Assembly session began Wednesday, January 8, 2014. The session runs 60 days and is scheduled to end on March 8. The last day for committee action is March 3. Click [here](#) for the schedule of General Assembly meetings.

State Budget Issues

The House and Senate budget conferees charged with reaching an agreement on a compromise budget for the remainder of FY14 and the next biennium are in place. Both chambers approved their version of the budget a week ago, and on Wednesday, the plans were rejected by the other chamber, setting the stage for senior budget writers to reconcile differences in the spending plans. However, reaching a compromise likely will be elusive by the scheduled end of the session on March 8, as the House and Senate continue their sparring over health care funding/Medicaid expansion.

The introduced budget for FY15/FY16 proposed \$5.57 billion for direct aid to public education in FY15 and \$5.62 billion in FY16. By comparison, the direct aid amount in FY14 is \$5.3 billion. Overall, the Senate-approved budget amendments add \$14.3 million in K-12 funding over the two years, while the House-backed proposal decreases funding by \$39.4 million. One of the key, large dollars issues that needs to be resolved in the FY15/FY16 education portion of the budget relates to the use of an inflation factor for non-personnel support costs, such as utilities, fuel and insurance. The introduced budget did not update the inflation factor, saving the state more than \$38 million each year of the biennium. The Senate approved amendments to restore about 75% of the amount in each year; the House does not address the reduction.

The group of legislators who compose the budget conference committee are as follows:

- House: Delegates Jones (Suffolk), Cox (Colonial Heights), Landes (Augusta), O'Bannon (Henrico), Greason (Loudoun) and Joannou (Portsmouth).
- Senators: Senators Colgan (Prince William), Stosch (Henrico), Howell (Fairfax), Saslaw (Fairfax), Norment (James City), Hanger (Augusta) and Watkins (Powhatan).

Click [here](#) for additional information from the Department of Education (DOE) about the House and Senate-approved budget amendments.

Education Legislation

The House and Senate are likely to agree next week on bills that would reduce the number of Standards of Learning (SOL) tests in grades 3-8. Similar provisions can be found in amended language for [HB 930](#), [SB 270](#) and [SB 306](#). However, a couple of related bills addressing SOL testing provisions have been stopped in the House. [SB 144](#) would have required all revisions to any SOL assessment to be finalized by December 31 of the school year prior to the year in which the revised assessment is administered. [SB 388](#) would have allowed local school divisions to determine the dates for administering SOL tests.

By not hearing bills that would revise or repeal the post-Labor Day school opening law, the Senate Education and Health Committee has essentially defeated the legislation for the year. The broadest bill, [HB 333](#), would have returned control of the school calendar to local school boards. [HB 577](#) would have allowed certain non-accredited schools to open prior to Labor Day, while [HB 610](#) would have allowed early openings in exchange for a longer Labor Day weekend.

[SB 236](#), which codifies the right of students to voluntarily pray, engage in or organize religious activities or religious expression before, during, and after the school day in the same manner and to the same extent that students may engage in nonreligious activities or expression, has passed the House 64 to 34.

Senate Education and Health Committee carried over [HB 324](#) until next year. The bill would have created a statewide virtual school and directed that the school receive the state and local SOQ per pupil funding amount, not to exceed \$6,500 per student. Instead, the Committee approved [HB 1115](#), which permits the DOE to contract with one or more local school boards that have created online courses, in order to make such courses available to other school divisions through Virtual Virginia. Such school divisions are allowed to charge a per-student or per-course fee.

The Committee also defeated [HB 515](#), which called for schools to notify parents of any student who violates a school board policy or compulsory attendance requirements when such violation could result in the student's suspension, long-term suspension or expulsion.

The Senate Finance Committee carried over until 2015 [HB 877](#), which would have allowed school divisions the option of establishing and administering their own deferred compensation and cash match plans.

E-mail Response

Questions or seeking more information? Please [contact CEPI](#) if you have any questions or need additional information about the 2014 General Assembly.