

**THE COMMONWEALTH EDUCATIONAL POLICY INSTITUTE**

AN INSTITUTE IN THE CENTER FOR PUBLIC POLICY

2016 General Assembly
K-12 Education Update**February 5, 2016**

The 2016 General Assembly session gaveled to order on Wednesday, January 13. The session runs 60 days and is scheduled to end on March 12. During the session, legislators will consider more than 2,500 bills and hundreds of resolutions. A two-year state budget for fiscal years 2017 and 2018 also will be developed. "Cross-over day," the last day for each house to act on its own bills, is February 16. House and Senate versions of the FY17/18 budget are slated to be released on February 21.

The House Education Committee is scheduled to meet on Mondays and Wednesdays during the session at 8:30 a.m. in House Room D. The Senate Education and Health Committee will meet on Thursdays at 8:30 a.m. in Senate Room B. Sub-committees will meet periodically throughout the session. Click [here](#) for the schedule of weekly meetings.

During the course of the session, legislative updates will be available weekly on the CEPI website at [General Assembly Updates](#). Specific information about the General Assembly session, action on bills and resolutions, committee and subcommittee meetings, and information about legislators can be found at [2016 Session](#). If you have a question about a legislative issue during the session, contact David Blount, CEPI Policy Associate, at dcblount2@vcu.edu.

Budget Issues

House and Senate budget writers await updated state revenue projections that should be available early next week, and then will have just about two weeks to make adjustments to the biennial budget proposed by Governor McAuliffe. As stated previously, there is some concern by lawmakers that revenue estimates may have to be adjusted downward for the remainder of FY16, thus affecting the base budget for FY17 and FY18 as well.

Regarding funding for K-12, House leaders appear poised to rework some of the major education initiatives in the introduced plan. This may include providing flexibility in using the \$139 million targeted for hiring more teachers, or using that money to pay for programs currently funded by lottery proceeds and then sending a portion of lottery funding back to the local level, also with some additional flexibility. There also may be some flexibility over the biennium related to proposed teacher salary increases, which were proposed as the state share of a two percent raise, effective early in FY18. On the Senate side, the picture is cloudier, though subcommittee chairmen on the Finance Committee have begun talking about budget priorities in their respective panels.

As a reminder, the money committees will report their respective amendments to the McAuliffe budget on February 21.

Click [here](#) for additional information about Governor McAuliffe's proposed changes to the public education budget for the remainder of FY16; and [here](#) for the proposed FY17/FY18 education budget.

Education Legislation

Both chambers now have passed legislation that would allow homeschoolers to participate in public school activities under the Virginia High School League. The House previously passed its bill, and the Senate gave its approval this past week to [SB 612](#) on a 22 to 17 vote.

Both also have approved bills to require kindergartners to have at least 20 minutes of physical activity per day. [HB 357](#) easily passed the House on a 72 to 26 vote, following a much closer vote on the Senate bill.

The House approved [HB 753](#) on a 76 to 22 vote this past week. It would make local school boards responsible for setting the school calendar and determining the opening day of the school year. A second bill, [HB 571](#), also was approved by a similar margin. It contains additional language that requires schools, in divisions that begin the year prior to Labor Day, to have a long (three days off from school) weekend over the Labor Day holiday. The Senate remains the roadblock for school calendar bills. The Education and Health Committee defeated its version of the Labor Day opening bill, [SB 340](#), this past week on a 9 to 7 vote.

In the Senate Education and Health Committee this past week, [SB 336](#) was reported. It moves existing provisions related to standard and advanced studies diplomas and standard and verified units of credit, and requires establishment of a Profile of a Virginia Graduate that identifies the knowledge and skills that students should attain during high school. The panel defeated several bills on close votes. [SB 321](#) would have required at least a 5.5 hour school day for kindergarten students; it was defeated 8 to 6. [SB 370](#) called for family life education standards to include age appropriate instruction on child abduction, exploitation and abuse issues. It was defeated on an 8 to 7 vote. The committee also defeated a trio of bills that would have reduced the total number and type of required Standards of Learning assessments to the minimum requirements established by the federal law.

On the House side, [HB 954](#) requires each local school division's policies and procedures regarding the identification and handling of suspected concussions in student-athletes to include a "Return to Learn Protocol." It was approved unanimously from the House Education Committee. On a narrow 12 to 10 vote, the House Finance Committee defeated [HB 1019](#), which would have modified the educational improvement scholarships tax credit to include certain K-12 students attending nonpublic schools.

There's been some movement on bills calling for a study of the Standards of Quality. [SJ 85](#) was reported from the Senate Rules Committee on Friday, while its counterpart, [HJ 112](#), was sent to the House Appropriations Committee, where it could show up in some form in the House budget amendments.

Looking ahead to this coming week, subcommittees of the House Education Committee are having special meetings on Monday morning to clear their dockets of bills. About two dozen bills

remain in the subcommittee on elementary and secondary education for consideration this week. Also on Monday, [HB 518](#) will be up for a vote in the House. A floor substitute for this school choice bill was given preliminary approval this past week. It directs the Board of Education (BOE) to select 12 schools identified in need of improvement under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act and those school boards must allow students in them to attend another school in the division. The measure also contains a reenactment clause requiring it to pass again next year to take effect, and it directs the Department of Education to examine potential costs to the state and local school division in the interim.

The Courts of Justice Committees in each chamber will consider legislation to allow summonses for passing a stopped bus to be mailed to the owner of a vehicle that unlawfully passed the bus, rather than be served by a law enforcement officer. The bills are [HB 168](#) and [SB 120](#).

Finally, both chambers plan to debate bills calling for charter schools referenda on Monday. The legislation provides for a referendum at the November election on whether to grant the BOE the authority to establish charter schools within local school divisions.

E-mail Response

Questions or seeking more information? Please [contact CEPI](#) if you have any questions or need additional information about the 2016 General Assembly.