



SMAC PTA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

March 30, 2022

This is the last week of the regular legislative session. Lawmakers adjourn on Friday and return on April 25 for the veto session. Many education bills were passed by one chamber last week. This week provides the opportunity for the other chamber to vote on those same bills, or for similar bills that passed both chambers to be addressed in conference committee where differences are reconciled and a final vote will be taken. In theory, any bill that doesn't make it past this week is dead.

To have a veto proof majority (2/3 of the chamber), bills in the Senate must pass with 27 votes and bills in the House must pass with 84 votes.

Some Good News – for now

Many of the bills we've been watching have not progressed through the legislative process.

- Creation of Education Savings Accounts that divert public tax dollars from public schools to private schools, was struck from bill HB2615 before it was voted on.
- Bill HB 2662 (Parent Bill of Rights) that would overburden our teachers and more, has stalled in committee. However, its sister bill SB 496 which contains less detail has passed the Senate.
- Bill HB 2690 (at-risk high-density) that would remove \$50 million from high poverty schools for teacher bonuses, seems to have stalled in committee. (\$1 million impact on SMSD)

This is all good news, but it's important to note that nothing is ever truly dead in the Kansas legislature until the session is over.

An Important (but disappointing) Special Education Vote

Last week, SMSD Representative Jarrod Ousley proposed an amendment to the K-12 Education Budget to increase special education funding by \$68 million, as recommended by the State Board of Education. Unfortunately, after first passing, the amendment failed on a reconsideration vote.

Why was this vote important?

Although the state is mandated to fund 92% of SPED expenses, it has not been meeting that obligation and has been underfunding SPED by around \$340 million annually. For SMSD this translates into about \$8 million annually that must be moved from the general operating budget to cover excess SPED expenses. This \$8 million could be used in many other ways to support student learning.

At a time when our state is doing well financially (\$3 billion surplus), this would have been a good time for the state to come closer to meeting its SPED funding obligation and to invest in Kansas kids.

How did SMSD area representatives vote?

This vote was only taken in the House and all of our SMSD representatives voted YES.

Education Bills Continuing in the Legislature

SB 455 & HB 2615 Open Enrollment

These are twin bills in the Senate and House that create open enrollment in Kansas, allowing attendance in any district in the state regardless of district residency. Both of these bills passed their respective chamber, but need to be passed by the other before going to the governor's desk.

Most districts in the state already have enrollment policies in place for non-residents. These bills that mandate open enrollment have a number of consequences to consider:

- Removes local control from school districts; overrides existing enrollment policies
- Increase in class sizes as non-resident enrollment could push class size to max capacity
- Encourages athlete recruitment, putting students residing in the district at a disadvantage
- Creates difficulties for districts in determining staffing and facility needs
- Creates equity issues; only those who can provide their own transportation are afforded the opportunity, as the bills do not include funding for transportation

How did our SMSD area legislators vote?

SB 455 passed in the Senate 23-16; HB 2615 passed in the House 63-59

Voting NO (preserving local control): *Senators* Corson, Holscher, Sykes, and Pettey & *Representatives* Clayton, Featherston, Hoye, Ousley, Meyer, Neighbor, Poskin, Ruiz, Stogsdill, Vaughn, Woodard, and Xu

Voting YES (mandating non-residents can enroll): *Senators* Thompson and Warren & *Rep* Esau

SB 496 Parent Bill of Rights

As previously mentioned, Bill SB 496 is the sister bill to the more detailed HB 2662 that seems to have stalled in the House (see discussion of HB2662 in the [2/27/22 SMAC PTA Legislative Update](#)). Bill SB 496 passed the Senate and has been referred to the K-12 Education Budget Committee where it could be amended to be similar to HB 2662. General concerns with bill SB 496:

- Inaccurately portrays schools as denying parental rights and access to curriculum
- Provides opening to take teacher time away from student learning with excessive learning material documentation, as in House bill HB2662
- Creates unforeseen issues due to vague wording

How did our SMSD area legislators vote?

SB 496 passed in the Senate 24-15

Voting NO: Senators Corson, Holscher, Sykes, and Pettey

Voting YES: Senators Thompson and Warren

Please continue to stay informed and engaged as the regular legislative session is coming to an end this week and the veto session starts up on April 25.