

Legislative Focus

Introduction

Legislative Focus is a bi-monthly notification primarily designed to communicate with APSCUF/CAP staff and its Legislative Committee in order to highlight relevant legislative priorities and note any changes in legislative action. The Legislative Focus will be used in conjunction with The Legislative Update for the Legislative Assembly.

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Legislative Focus generally contains:

- A brief analysis of key legislative development during the past week;
- An update on any action of previously tracked legislation;
- A legislative schedule and listing of meetings for pertinent legislation;
- When necessary, a call for action when APSCUF member input is needed.

Summary of Recent Legislation

House Bill 870, P.N. 993 (Herman): Amends Title 71 (State Government) further providing for retention and reinstatement of service credits, election of membership and purchase of prior service. The bill adds provisions for school employees regarding the transfer and purchase of certain pension service credit from the independent retirement program to the Class AA. *Referred to House State Government Committee on 3/14/2005*

House Resolution 177, P.N. 1280 (Armstrong): Resolution establishing a select committee to examine the academic atmosphere and the degree to which faculty have the opportunity to instruct and students have the opportunity to learn in an environment conducive to the pursuit of knowledge and truth at State-related and State-owned colleges and universities and community colleges in this Commonwealth.

Passed over in House Education Committee 4/13/2005

House Bill 894, P.N. 2133 (Saylor): Exempts retired teachers who return to school service from state-mandated professional development requirements if they work no more than 180 school days. Retirees who return to teaching for more than 180 days would be required to fulfill the state's continuing education requirements. HB 894 also requires the Department of Education (PDE) to

provide access to its free, online professional development courses to all educators, not just those currently employed by a school entity. The bill also requires PDE to maintain all retirees' teaching certificates in active status. (Similar legislation – Senate Bill 390 – was passed by the Senate Education Committee on April 13). HB 894 was referred to the Senate Education Committee with first consideration on June 8, 2005.

HB 894 was amended to delete language previously added by the House that permitted institutions of higher education to provide continuing professional development to their own faculty members who hold state teaching certificates.

House Bill 564, P.N. 637 (Baker): On June 7, the House Judiciary Committee passed legislation that allows colleges and universities to conduct criminal background checks of potential full-time faculty and staff and to use those records in making hiring decisions based on the institution's written policy for use of such information. House Bill 564 also allows colleges and universities to require job applicants to self-disclose criminal history information related to sex offenses, misappropriation of funds and felony convictions.

HB 564 has been re-committed to the House Rules Committee.

House Bill 1706, (not printed yet) (Shapiro): Creates an articulation system among the state's 14 community colleges, 14 state-owned universities and four state-related universities. Students who transfer among those colleges and universities would be assured that their credits would count toward graduation. Shapiro's legislation would benefit more than 400,000 college students – 150,000 community college students, 106,000 students at state universities and more than 150,000 at state-related universities – Penn State, Temple, Lincoln and Pittsburgh. Shapiro's legislation is a central component of Gov. Rendell's work-force development initiatives. The initiatives, including the \$101 million Job Ready Pennsylvania, target the needs of employers and deliver focused training and education to the work force. The goal is to ensure that residents are better prepared, better educated and better able to meet the challenges and opportunities of today's marketplace. Under Shapiro's bill, colleges and universities would have one year to develop a system of credit sharing. If the articulation system was not in place after a year, the state Department of Education would implement the guidelines. In addition to statewide articulation agreements, several other reforms would help accelerate students' progression toward a degree. Among them: a statewide course numbering system, a common calendar and common prerequisites for all bachelor's degree programs. *Shapiro's legislation (H.B. 1706) has 34 bipartisan co-sponsors.*

Senate Bill 511, P.N. 629 (Gordner): Amends the Job Enhancement Act by adding that the list of approved courses of study for the Technology Work Experience Internship Program would be the same *for undergraduate students* as is currently required under the New Economy Technology Scholarship Act.

The legislation also adds that master's degree students would be eligible for the program.

Referred to Senate Education Committee, discussed 6/14/2005

House Bill 616/Senate Bill 307, (Zug (H))/(Pleggi(S)): Provides capital funds to assist private colleges and universities in Pennsylvania to construct new facilities. The Independent Higher Education and Community Financing Act establishes a program and board that would assist independent institutions of higher education in capital projects related to community and economic development projects. The General Assembly would appropriate funds to pay for 50% of the debt service on bonds issued by the authority to qualified institutions.

HB 616 passed the House. SB 307 referred to Senate Education Committee.

Upcoming Committee Meetings

*Meeting set for 9:00 a.m., Tuesday, June 22, Room 60 East Wing, House Education Committee