

House Pensions Committee moves changes to Tier 3

The House Pensions Committee has advanced HB 2533 which changes part of the formula for Tier 3 (new Cash Balance employees). A couple of minor amendments were also adopted as part of the bill; 1) to ensure non-vested employees could take the employer matching portion with them when they leave 2) technical amendment to clarify current law with respect to baseline date for dividends.

Chairman Johnson introduced a memo from KPERS indicating that even with the change in law to 4% on the interest crediting rate, that based on historic KPERS data, with the dividend laid out in the bill, the benefit would not be lower than 5%. The study by KPERS indicates that employee benefits would not be negatively impacted by the change. Accordingly, most committee members reacted positively toward the bill after that information was submitted.

Representative Trimmer spoke saying that the legislature should stay the course on the recent changes to the KPERS plan for Tier 3 employees and not make any additional changes. The bill passed out on a voice vote.

Next Tuesday at 10:30 a.m. there will be a rally at the Statehouse to support the implementation of a Cost of Living increase or COLA for current KPERS retirees. We would encourage you to attend if possible.

Senate Education Committee hears radical charter school bill

The Senate Education Committee held a hearing on SB 196, a radical expansion of charter schools. This bill was killed last year in the House Education Committee.

The bill allows for multiple authorizers for charter schools (today only locally elected school boards may authorize charter schools). It would create a system whereby any current private school could find an authorized to declare it as a public charter school making it eligible for state aid for every student currently enrolled. The cost potential to the state would be enormous if the Legislature approved funding to match the increase. Alternatively, they could simply spread current funding more thinly to cover the public school enrollment growth,

reducing aid for all schools.

Research shows that charter schools do not increase student achievement and, in most cases actually perform more poorly than traditional public schools. A large expansion of charter schools also often results in the re-segregation of education.

KNEA testified in opposition to the bill along with KASB, Game on for Kansas Schools, the Kansas PTA, MainStream Coalition, Kansas Association of Special Education Administrators, United School Administrators, Trego County USD 208, Blue Valley USD 229, KCK USD 500, Topeka USD 501, Goddard USD 265, Wichita USD 259, Bucklin USD 459, and USD 327.

Supporting the bill were Pastor Wade Moore of Wichita, Darlene Cornfield of the Northfield School, Larry Fischer (private citizen), The Kansas Policy Institute, and Kansans for Liberty.