

Senate Pensions wraps up

The Senate KPERS Committee, according to a statement by the Chair, has finished their work for this legislative session. At the end of the meeting Senator King thanked everyone for their work and time spent working the pension bills sent over from the House.

Yesterday the committee originally planned to work SB 425 which included the contents of HB 2533, the cash balance tweak bill. SB 425 also included the additional measure of taking corrections officers from KPERS and putting them in the KP&F. Since the Senate Committee decided against placing Corrections Officers in KP&F this session and since the issue is going to be "studied further during the interim" they are no longer using SB 425. They have instead returned to HB 2533 and voted that bill out of committee. We believe that the bill will simply pass the Senate in its current form and then would go directly to the Governor.

The Senate Pensions also passed the following bills out of committee:

HB 2564 which is would require 60 days before a KPERS retiree can be reemployed by a KPERS entity. This bill cleaned up language regarding working after retirement that had not been addressed in Tier 2. This part of the working after retirement issue and is geared towards appeasing the IRS. This bill will be placed on the Consent Calendar

HB 2596 which the public employee "furlough protection" bill which protects the retirement of those placed on involuntary furlough was passed out committee. The bill was amended successfully by Sen. Kelly to remove the sunset and allow it to be made permanent in statute.

HB 2602 the bill to allow the KPERS agency unclassified percentage to go from 25-50% was passed out as amended by Sen. Masterson. The amendment allows the agency not have a cap in place at all.

Sen. King expects no further meetings of the committee unless something unexpected comes over from the House.

AG Derek Schmidt talks Gannon with Appropriations

The Attorney General talked to the House Appropriations Committee regarding the analysis of the Gannon school finance decision.

Schmidt discussed both the equity and adequacy portions of the decision, telling the committee that they had to address equity by July 1 and that the lower court would then review both the equity solution and adequacy. Interestingly, the Supreme Court said that equity and adequacy were not mutually exclusive.

The equity decision addresses two areas: capital outlay and supplemental general state aid (LOB aid). The legislature had three options to consider. First they could do nothing, they could do some adjustment but less than called for under current statutes, or they could fully fund both.

If they fail to address the capital outlay issue, the court could enjoin part of cap outlay statute. On the LOB issue, the court should enjoin all of LOB if there is no solution but there is wiggle room in the decision for the lower court to apply a different consequence if the legislature failed to address LOB equity.

When it comes to adequacy, the lower court is directed to consider the Rose Standards from a Kentucky court case rather than actual costs which were used in Montoy. Actual costs are not entirely abandoned but are just one thing to consider.

Full House amends, advances financial literacy bill

House Bill 2475 was up for debate on the House floor today. This bill started as a requirement for all high school students to take a one semester class on financial literacy during the junior or senior year in order to graduate.

The bill had been amended in committee to infuse financial literacy standards throughout the curriculum in all grades and to test financial literacy standards on the state assessments. The State Department would report on progress to the legislature.

An amendment was offered on the floor by Rep. Ward Cassidy (R-St. Francis) to require schools to teach handshaking. Cassidy argued that a good handshake is critical to success in business and life. The amendment was adopted.

Rep. Pete DeGraaf (R-Mulvane) then proposed an amendment that would take the bill back to its original form requiring a financial literacy class for graduation. Education Committee Chair Kasha Kelley (R-Arkansas City) supported the amendment even though her committee had amended the bill. This amendment failed on a vote of 31 to 86. The bill as it came out of committee plus the handshaking amendment was then advanced on a voice vote. The final action vote will come tomorrow.

Senate debates drug testing/fingerprinting bill

Senate Bill 335 dealing with drug testing of teachers suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol and requiring fingerprinting for any teacher not already fingerprinted upon the next license renewal was debated by the full Senate.

The bill was amended in committee to allow for a second drug test by a different lab at the teacher's request and to provide for a state support program for any employees failing a test.

Under an amendment by Education Chair Steve Abrams (R-Arkansas City), school districts would have to establish an "impaired teachers program" either locally or in cooperation with another district or service center. The amendment passed, essentially ending the state support program.

At that point the bill was passed over while they waited on another amendment to be drafted. The Senate went ahead with the rest of their agenda. It will be some time before they get back to this bill.