

Pensions Committee work done for this year

As of this morning both the House Pensions and Senate Pensions Committees of the Kansas Legislature have finished their committee work. This week the House considered many options to change the current working after retirement rules. After much discussion, testimony and lobbying efforts there will not be a bill that makes changes to the current working after retirement rules. House Pension Chair Steve Johnson will ask for an interim committee to continue to study the issue in preparation for the 2015 legislative session. The Senate Pensions Committee finished their work on Monday. Our task now is to follow the bills that were passed out of the committees and check for any nasty amendments that may be offered on the floor of either chamber before First Adjournment.

Bills stopped in committees:

- HB 2519 which was a change to the KPERS Plan from a Defined Benefit to a Defined Contribution System.
- HB 2760 a bill to make changes to the rules regarding working after retirement, extending the waiting time to 180 days. Amendments had been proposed to change the rules entirely.
- HB 2473 which would be a change in the lump sum payment to 100% upon retirement which would have basically been a change to a DC plan through the backdoor.
- SB 425 which would have authorized bringing all Corrections Officers into KP&F. The cost of the change would have caused downsizing the number of corrections officers in the correction system.

Bills that we did not stop in committees:

- HB 2533 A bill that changes the payout for Tier III employees which could cause a lower payout upon their retirement. This has passed the House and the Senate Pensions Committee. It will next be considered by the full Senate. If passed it will most probably be signed into law.

Bills that passed the committee and we will watch:

- HB 2564 is a technical clean-up bill changing the waiting period for Tier II

employees to 60 days. The correct language for waiting period was not in the original Tier II language.

- HB 2596 protects the retirement of employees placed on involuntary furlough, such as those who lose one day of work per week because of budget cuts to their departments. The bill also takes away the sunset provision and makes the law permanent.
- HB 2602 which increases the cap on the number of classified employees that KPERS may hire. Our position was if you pay state workers a decent wage to begin with you do not need to go down this road.
- HB 2583 the Iran divestiture bill.

This is an even numbered year which means for the Kansas Legislature, all bills not passed this year are dead. That being said, in the reality of the legislature, nothing ever dies.

Appropriations on school finance

The House Appropriations Committee met for the second day of school finance study and today got a detailed explanation of how all the various parts of the school finance system work and how funds are calculated.

The biggest area of interest was at-risk funding and using free lunch as the funding proxy for distribution of funds to school districts. The weighting is generated by students who qualify for free lunch but spent on students who meet the criteria of being at-risk. More students receive services than there are free lunch students. There seemed to be some interest in looking at what the impact would be of changing to use of census poverty data rather than free lunch. Chairman Marc Rhoades (R-Newton) said the state would spend about \$150 million less if they used census data.

They will continue their school finance discussions tomorrow.

"Gotcha" amendment on the House floor

Representative Scott Schwab (R-Olathe) offered an amendment on a tax bill during floor debate today that was characterized as "political gamesmanship." His amendment would have restored the income tax back to the rates used before the Brownback cuts were enacted in 2012. Schwab announced that he would vote against his own amendment but merely wanted to show Kansans who complained about the tax cuts that there was

not the "political will" to repeal them.

Democrats and Republicans came to the well to speak against the amendment which they said was an inappropriate tactic designed merely to embarrass those who think the cuts were reckless by making them vote for full repeal - a vote which would be characterized as a vote for a massive tax increase.

No one took the bait. The amendment failed 0 to 120.

Tempers in House Ed Committee

The House Education Committee met today to continue talking about the student data privacy bill that is opposed by extreme conservatives. An amendment to the bill was offered by Rep. John Bradford (R-Lansing) that would gut the bill and replace it with language that would have a negative impact on the KIDS data system used by the State Department.

Rep. Amanda Grosserode (R-Lenexa) had reviewed the Bradford amendment and done a good job of identifying some parts that were helpful and others that were very damaging/concerning. She discussed a number of her concerns with the committee. Eventually the discussion was set aside to continue later in an attempt to see if there was some compromise that could be hammered out.

At that point, Chair Kasha Kelley (R-Arkansas City) went into a long talk about issues they had discussed over the course of the session and some that were still out there including Sub for SB 22, the tuition tax credit/voucher bill and HB 2621, the anti-common core bill. She announced her intention to have a moderated meeting just for the common core at which both sides would be heard and that she would have that meeting over the April interim.

Committee members objected saying that they had committed to constituent and family events over the break and could not attend such a meeting. Kelley told them not to worry, it was not necessary for them to attend; that she could have it recorded, but did not address their concerns. Her apparent insistence that this meeting go ahead did not sit well with many members of the committee and eventually the meeting was adjourned with no resolution on this issue.

They will meet again tomorrow.

