

## **Making (some) Colleges Affordable**

There is a state-funded scholarship program for students moving on to college. It grants scholarships for exemplary students who need support in attending college.

In the past, this program was split between scholarships for those available for students heading to private colleges and those attending state colleges. Last year some Senators argued that because private college students appear to be more likely to graduate in four years compared to those in public institutions, that private colleges were more worthy of the state scholarship investment.

This year a provision was inserted in HB 2135, the budget bill passed by the Senate last week. It would direct 83% of the scholarship money go to students in private institutions with only 17% going to those in state colleges.

Senator Vicki Schmidt (R-Topeka) offered an amendment on the Senate floor to remove this provision. The amendment failed on a vote of 15 to 23.

Want to know who supports spending 83% of state scholarship dollars on private college students? Here's the vote on the Schmidt amendment:

Bowers, Faust-Goudeau, Francisco, Haley, Hawk, Hensley, Holland, Kelly, Kerschen, King, Longbine, McGinn, Ostmeier, Pettey, Schmidt

Abrams, Arpke, Baumgardner, Bruce, Denning, Donovan, Fitzgerald, Holmes, Knox, Love, Lynn, Masterson, Melcher, O'Donnell, Olson, Petersen, Pilcher-Cook, Powell, Pyle, Smith, Tyson, Wagle, Wilborn

**Present but not voting:** La Turner, Wolf

## **KPERS Working After Retirement Bill on House Floor Tomorrow**

HB 2253, as amended, would extend the current working after retirement provisions until July 1, 2016. Different working after retirement provisions contained in the bill then would be in effect from July 1, 2016, to July 1, 2017. On July 1, 2017, the current rules

would come back. The bill would apply to the State and all local and school employers affiliated with KPERS.

So, let's see how this works. Current law is extended through July 1, 2016. There's a different law from July 1, 2016 through July 1, 2017. Starting July 1, 2018, we go back to the current law.

For licensed school professionals, the bill would distinguish between special teacher positions and non-special teacher positions. A retiree who returns to work for a school district as a special teacher would continue under the current provisions working after retirement provisions, which would sunset on July 1, 2018. Starting on July 1, 2016, and ending on July 1, 2017, a school district could fill a non-special teacher position with a retiree if the school district can certify to the State Board of Education (Board) the following information and efforts taken:

The date the vacant position was posted internally and externally;

The number of applications received;

The number and dates of interviews conducted;

The specific reason that non-retired applicants did not meet the position requirements, as compared to the retiree the school district proposes to hire; and

A certification there was no pre-arrangement contract between the school district and the retiree.

The Board would review each request and, determining the conditions of the bill are met, would approve the school district's request. The Department of Education would report, by school district, the number of requests made, the number of retirees hired, and the positions for which the retirees were hired to the Legislature and the Joint Committee on Pensions, Investments and Benefits at the start of the 2018 Legislative Session.

KNEA (along with USA/KS, Wichita USD 259, KASB, and the Kansas Association of Retired School Personnel) supported the bill when it was a clean extension of the sunset on current law. The Committee amended the bill to include the year-off provision. KNEA does not support the bill in its current form.

## Drop Dead Week Off to a Slow Start

Drop dead day is scheduled for Friday, April 3 but there seems to be a desire to end Thursday night and let legislators go home for a long Easter weekend. Senate Majority Leader Terry Bruce announced such a plan on the floor today.

There were no bill debates in either chamber today. The House tomorrow has 39 bills on the debate schedule. (HB 2253 is number 39!) They will also debate two constitutional amendments designed to reduce the independence of the Supreme Court.

The Senate does not plan to debate bills until Wednesday.

Links

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