

## **Senate Commerce Committee passes bill marginalizing public employees**

The Senate Commerce Committee this morning held a hearing on and immediately passed HB 2391, a bill which converts state jobs from classified to unclassified status. State agencies would be allowed to change the status of positions whenever a new person is hired or someone is promoted or transfers. Essentially it sets up a system where the agency gradually eliminates classified positions which currently have due process protections. Unclassified employees have no due process protections.

The bill has been sought by the Kansas Chamber of Commerce and Americans for Prosperity, two organizations that consistently work to undermine public workers.

Senator Holland brought the Committee's attention to a letter from the United States Department of Labor that suggested passage of this bill along with some others under consideration would put Kansas at risk of losing millions of dollars in federal funding. Nevertheless, the Committee approved the bill with Senators Holland and Faust-Goudeau recorded as voting NO, and Senator Baumgardner recorded as passing.

The bill now goes to the full Senate for consideration. It has already passed the House.

## **KPERS bonding bill comes out of conference**

The KPERS Conference Committee has reached a deal on the bonding proposal. House conferees agreed to the Senate's \$1 billion position and only considering changes in contribution rate for FY 2016 & 2017. They would then revert to current law.

The Senators agreed to the House offer but asked for House to run the report first. The conference committee report will be in SB 228. Before the report can be considered they will need to run an "agree to disagree" first. That happens when all six conferees do not sign the report. Approval of an "agree to disagree" allows the report to be considered with only four signatures.

Working after retirement has been deferred for the moment because they no longer have a bill in which to put an agreement. The Senate KPERS Committee is discussing working after retirement today.

We will continue to report on working after retirement and other KPERS issues as they happen.

### **Conference Committee agrees to move local elections**

The House and Senate Elections Conference Committee today approved a report moving local elections (cities, counties, school boards) from the spring of odd numbered years to the fall of even numbered years. The report is in HB 2104.

If approved this change would put non-partisan municipal elections on the same ballot as partisan state and federal offices. It would require the local candidates to be at the top of the ballot.

The bill was opposed by school districts, counties, and cities. Proponents argued that it would increase voter turnout for local elections; opponents argued that local candidates and campaigns would be lost in the deluge of political advertising and mail related to state and federal elections. It also has the potential to open up new avenues to campaign funding and coordination by dark money groups.

KNEA joins KASB and other public education advocates in opposing this change.

### **Editorials and just plain good reporting**

The papers have been weighing in on a few controversial legislative actions including action on the proposed repeal of in-state tuition for the children of undocumented aliens. The Salina Journal wondered if the same issue would come up if "they had blonde hair." Click [here](#) to read their editorial<sup>[1]</sup> which tells the Legislature, "We don't have the luxury of indulging in institutional racism."

In a side note, it was reported today that nine members of the House Education Committee have launched an official complaint against Rep. Valdenia Winn (D-Kansas City) for her remarks during the committee debate. In recent years, complaints have been filed against former Speaker Mike O'Neal and Rep. Jim Ward. Nothing came of those hearings.

The Topeka Capital Journal took on Senator Tom Arpke whose proposal to shift 84% of state scholarship money for post-secondary education over to private colleges in an editorial entitled "Arpke's Folly Must be Rejected."<sup>[2]</sup> The paper takes the position that shifting 84% of state scholarship money to institutions that educate only 17% of Kansas

students is just plain wrong. Our thanks to Senator Vicki Schmidt who unsuccessfully attempted to strip Arpke's measure from the budget bill.

### **Senior KNEA lobbyist schooled by freshman legislator**

We were shocked to learn that KNEA lobbyist Mark Desetti, now in his 17th legislative session in Kansas, has been found to have committed a grave error; an error that was pointed out to him by a freshman legislator in his first session.

Yesterday, Desetti told us to report that there were 39 bills up for debate in the House today. He was incorrect. He should have noticed "the line" - a physical line on the calendar with the words "the line" - that indicates the end of the debate calendar. That line came at the top of the list of bills. And so those 39 bills were not up for debate today.

Our thanks to Rep. Fred Patton who apparently reads what we write!

#### Links

1. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=57e7c14b3b75940c1b0bb8909ee0bd1c90f421760e0c1a09184f6ab26f17c965efe4e4a1c1e0f1b3>
2. <http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=a676b677e429781d2aeaed9f7ab83855e691d847d7f92cf1f06fedd5583704194f3caa37e3c1bb35>

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