

Legislative Report – Mr. Mahler

(submitted as a written report)

December 2013

Federal Legislation:

The US House of Representatives passed the Murray-Ryan budget deal, which restored some of the sequestration cuts, including cuts for education funding. The entire PA delegation voted for the bill. It now moves on to the Senate, where it is expected to pass by a small margin. PA Senator Pat Toomey is expected to vote against this budget.

Our administration estimates that the direct impact on North Allegheny will be relatively small, preventing funding cuts of approximately \$85,000. However, there may be indirect impacts related to State funding and the impact on School Based Access Program for IEPs is unknown at this point. We currently receive Access reimbursements of approximately \$800,000 to \$1 million per year.

Pennsylvania Legislation:

Senate Bill 1085, Charter School Reform: There has been no significant action since Mrs. Bishop's report on November 20, though it came up for "second consideration" on December 9. This is the first opportunity for Senators who are not members of the committee to which the bill was assigned to offer an amendment to the bill. It does not appear that any amendments were offered. However, Senate Majority Leader Dominic Pileggi, R-9, of Chester, said the bill will not come up for a vote until January at the earliest. When it does, he said, the bill likely will include amendments.

NOTE: On "third consideration," Senators can amend a bill only by unanimous consent of the Senate. However, debate takes place and the various Senators can express their support or opposition to the bill. At the conclusion of debate, each Senator votes on the bill as the roll is called. In the Senate, a simple majority -- or 26 -- of Senators must vote yes on the bill for it to pass.

The Pennsylvania School Boards Association applauds the passage of the first pieces of a legislative package being sent to Gov. Tom Corbett that provides new and strengthened protections regarding child abuse:

Senate Bill 23 -- Amends the definition of "perpetrator" to include current and former spouses and paramours of parents, as well as certain family members. The bill also includes additional provisions for expunction of records in circumstances where the perpetrator was under the age of 18.

Senate Bill 28 -- Enhances criminal penalties for child abuse, as well as for instances of false reporting of suspected child abuse.

Senate Bill 30 -- Provides for a statewide database for anyone who files a false claim of child abuse. Also provides parameters for expedited appeals of indicated reports.

Senate Bill 34 -- Amends the Professional Educator Discipline Act to expand its jurisdiction and allows revocation of teaching certificates through the state Department of Education in instances of founded reports of child abuse.

Senate Bill 1116 -- Streamlines the duties and responsibilities of Multidisciplinary Investigative Teams to allow for a more open and expedited process of investigating reports of child abuse.

PSBA will continue to work with the General Assembly as the remainder of the legislative package progresses through the Senate and House.

The State House passed a bill that amends the state's wiretap law, considered one of the most restrictive in the country, to give school boards the ability to use audio recordings on school buses, which are already equipped with soundless video cameras. The Senate is not likely to review this until next year.

The State House passed bill 810, which would require drug testing for prospective school district employees. The bill applies to anyone with direct contact with children, including prospective employees of public and private schools, intermediate units, vocational and technical schools, independent contractors and their employees beginning April 1, 2015. A controlled substances testing report would have to be submitted and paid for by the applicant after an offer of employment is made.

House Bill 1741 was amended on the House floor and is still awaiting final action. As amended, the bill requires school boards to provide a public notice on the district website and in a local newspaper before voting on a collective bargaining agreement or any proposed employment contract for a professional educator who is not a member of an employee organization. The notice must be posted at least 48 hours prior to board's public meeting to vote on the agreement, and remain posted on the website for an additional 30 days.

The House Education Committee approved several bills. The one with the most potential impact is HB 1506, which delays the timeframe for implementation of five Keystone Exams that 2 will eventually be required for graduation by 2020-21 (Algebra I, Literature, Biology, English composition, civics & government). The bill also allows, rather than requires, PDE to develop the remaining five exams (algebra II, geometry, US history, chemistry, world history) subject to annual appropriation.

There are now 26 sponsors (the number needed to pass a bill in the Senate) for **Senate Bill 76**, which would eliminate property taxes in favor of sales and income taxes. **House Bill 1189** addresses similar issues. Both are in the committee stage.

The Pennsylvania Department of Education released updates to School Performance Profile last week. Based on a scale of 100, the average SPP score for traditional public schools was 77.1, brick and mortar charter schools was 66.4 and cyber charters was 46.8. NASH was given a rating of 94.1 and NAI was given a score of 90.6. Next year, the two schools will be reported as a single institution.