

March 17, 2019

Legislature past half-way point but many bills remain

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Wednesday, March 13th at 5 PM was the deadline for bills to have passed the chamber in which they started. In other words, House bills needed to pass the House, and Senate bills needed to have passed the Senate by that deadline. Typically, by this point in the process the number of bills has narrowed significantly, the topics have coalesced, and decisions have been made on companion bills as to which one will keep moving along. Much of that has happened, but the number of bills passed by each chamber is staggering: 331 passing the House and about 308 passing the Senate! If the winnowing process continues, more than half of those will not make it to the Governor's desk.

As reported last week, much of what we've been watching remains under consideration in at least one of the chambers. These include social emotional learning, funding for special education, addressing the teacher shortage, school construction assistance, seated lunch, early learning eligibility, climate bills, and school safety and planning. And, with next week's committee agendas posted, it looks like the Senate levy authority bill, SSB 5313, will get another hearing – this time on a proposed substitute (likely posted Monday).

On Tuesday, March 12, the Senate debated [SJR 8201](#), which would have sent a constitutional amendment to Washington voters next November to reduce the threshold for passing school bonds from 60% to simple majority. The measure received 28 votes, falling five votes short of the 33 votes needed to meet the constitutionally required two-thirds majority. Although the concept of "another path" (e.g., 55% threshold) was mentioned during the debate, it was unclear if the issue would be brought up again. The hour-long floor debate is [here](#) and is definitely worth watching to hear the various arguments for and against.

Bills that also failed to make last week's cutoff include:

- HB 1010 would have allowed the Washington State Patrol to destroy guns instead of the current requirement to resell;
- HB 1068 and SB 5062 would have limited gun magazines to 10 rounds;
- SB 5066 would have reduced the 60% threshold to pass bonds to simple majority, subject to Washington voters approving a change to the state constitution (partner bill to SJR 8201);
- SB 5315 would have increased school staffing ratios for counselors, nurses, psychologists and social workers, starting with school districts that had 50% or more students eligible for free or reduced-price meals in 2019-21, 35% in the 2021-23 biennium, and for all school districts in the 2023-25 biennium;

- SB 5572 would have created a small rural school modernization grant program (it is possible the policy bill will find new life in the 2019-21 capital budget); and
- SB 5801 would have expanded the teacher retire/rehire program to other positions and through 2023.

Status of Top 5 Legislative Priorities (all bills may be accessed [here](#))

The following bills are still under consideration:

- Social and Emotional Learning:
 - SSB 5082 had a public hearing and is scheduled for a vote in House Education March 21st;
- School Construction and Simple Majority for Bonds:
 - See above for the conversation about “simple majority for bonds.”
 - ESSB 5853 would increase the per student space allocation, direct OSPI to provide recommendations on improving the school construction assistance program by 2022, and cap total school construction project funding to one-third of the state’s bond capacity.
- Preventing Gun Violence:
 - While not related to the Legislative Assembly-adopted position, the Legislature did pass, and the Governor signed into law March 14, a buy-back program for firearms with bump stocks. The Legislature committed \$150 for each firearm with a bump stock turned in, up to five firearms per person (and a total of \$150,000 in state funds for the program).
- Strategies to Address the Teacher Shortage:
 - HB 1139, the comprehensive approach to teacher shortage, passed the House and is scheduled for a vote in the Senate education committee on March 18 at 1:30 PM.
 - SHB 1621 would remove passing the state basic skills test as a pre-requisite for admission to a teacher preparation program. The bill is also scheduled for the March 18 committee meeting.
- Strategic K-12 Investments to Close Gaps:
 - Levies: Allow school district choice.
 - A proposed substitute to SSB 5313 has been scheduled for a public hearing in the Senate Ways & Means Committee on March 21 at 3:30 PM.
 - HB 2140 is a title only bill, which means details about the bill will be filled in later. This is likely the House bill to address levies.
 - Close Special Education funding gaps
 - 2SSB 5091 would raise the funding multiplier for students with disabilities from .9609 to 1.0. The bill has a public hearing March 19 in the House Education committee. Rep. Gerry Pollet, D-Seattle, has indicated he will seek an

- amendment in the House Appropriations Committee to increase the multiplier to 1.07.
- Increase prototypical school funding to Initiative 1351 levels to improve student well-being:
 - Bills in the House and Senate have failed to pass a cutoff. While they could be considered “NTIB,” lawmakers are pessimistic that funding for school staffing will be included in this year’s operating budget due to revenue challenges.
- Lower the High-Poverty LAP threshold to the state annual average of free or reduced-price meal-eligible students to increase services to more students: No bills.

Look for bills and committee hearings that relate to WSPTA’s “Also Supported Positions” adopted at Legislative Assembly and WSPTA resolutions below and in the Bill Tracking List.

WSPTA’s Week in Review

Tacoma parent Lisa Keating testified in favor of SSB 5082, the social emotional learning bill. She and her daughter Stella also testified in favor of SB 5689, which would direct school districts to adopt policies and procedures for transgender students and identify a point of contact and conduct training to support transgender students.

The Week Ahead (Schedule subject to change)

Monday, March 18

10 a.m., Senate Law & Justice, SHR 4

Public hearing:

- SHB 1949 - Conducting a feasibility study to examine and make recommendations regarding the establishment of a single point of contact firearm background check system.

1:30 p.m., Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education, SHR 1

Public hearing:

- E2SHB 1139 - Expanding the current and future educator workforce supply.
- 2SHB 1216 - Concerning non-firearm measures to increase school safety and student well-being.
- 2SHB 1272 - Concerning school lunch durations.
- SHB 1621 - Concerning basic skills assessments for approved teacher preparation programs.

1:30 p.m., House Education, HHR A

Public hearing:

- SSB 5593 - Addressing equity in access to dual credit opportunities.
- HB 1459 - Establishing a running start summer school pilot program. (Courtesy hearing)
- HB 1596 - Concerning flexibility schools and zones. (Courtesy hearing)

Tuesday, March 19

10 a.m., Senate Environment, Energy & Technology, SHR 1

Public hearing:

- E2SHB 1110 - Reducing the greenhouse gas emissions associated with transportation fuels.

1:30 p.m., House College & Workforce Development, HHR B

Public hearing:

- E2SSB 5327 - Expanding career connected learning opportunities.
- E2SSB 5393 - Establishing a statewide free college program by changing the state need grant to the Washington college promise scholarship.
- SB 5635 - Expanding opportunities for students to pursue mental and behavioral health professions.

1:30 p.m., House Health Care & Wellness, HHR A

Public hearing:

- SJM 8008 - Urging federal legislation to prohibit the sale of tobacco and vapor products to anyone under the age of 21.

1:30 p.m., Senate Higher Education & Workforce Development, SHR 2

Public hearing:

- 2SHB 1973 - Establishing the Washington dual enrollment scholarship pilot program.
- ESHB 1998 - Creating a task force on sexual violence at institutions of higher education.
- E2SHB 1311 - Concerning college bound scholarship eligible students.

3:30 p.m., House Education, HHR A

Public hearing:

- E2SSB 5091 - Concerning state and federal special education funding. (Funding bill)
- SSB 5532 - Public Hearing - Concerning special education. (This is a policy bill)

Wednesday, March 20

8 a.m., House Civil Rights & Judiciary, HHR A

Public hearing:

- SB 5205 - Concerning provisions governing firearms possession by persons who have been found incompetent to stand trial and who have a history of one or more violent acts.

1:30 p.m., House College & Workforce Development, HHR B

Public hearing:

- ESSB 5410 - Concerning a systemwide credit policy regarding advanced placement, international baccalaureate, and Cambridge international exams.

1:30 p.m., Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education, SHR 1

Public hearing:

- E2SHB 1599 - Promoting career and college readiness through modified high school graduation requirements.

Thursday, March 21

1:30 p.m., House Capital Budget, HHR B

Public hearing:

- ESSB 5853 - Regarding the school construction assistance program.

1:30 p.m., House Finance, HHR A

Public hearing:

- E2SSB 5116 - Public Hearing - Supporting Washington's clean energy economy and transitioning to a clean, affordable, and reliable energy future. (If measure is referred to committee.)

3:30 p.m., Senate Ways & Means, SHR 4

Public hearing:

- SSB 5313 - Concerning school levies. (Hearing is on the Proposed Substitute.)

Friday, March 22

8 a.m., Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education, SHR 1

Public hearing:

- SHB 2108 - Concerning state funding for K-3 class sizes in schools.
- SHB 1658 - Concerning paraeducators.

Olympia [Capitol Campus Map](#)

HHR refers to hearing rooms in the John L. O'Brien Building

SHR refers to hearing rooms in the John A. Cherberg Building