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Floor action to dominate legislative work

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Following the fiscal cutoff on February 22, Washington state legislators turned their attention to floor action in a virtual world. In both the House and Senate, a limited number of lawmakers and staff are present. Most discussion is conducted with a single legislator's face on TVW: in the House, a muted blue background with the capitol dome backs the legislator; in the Senate, the rules are a little more flexible, with some legislators opting for a Zoom background of the Senate chambers, while others have an image from their district or special photo. Caucus meetings take place offline, using the Microsoft Teams platform. Deliberations are taking longer, with both the House and Senate working late into the evening during the week and the House working a full day on Saturday and Sunday.

The next cutoff is March 9. That's the date for bills to have passed out of the chamber in which they started. Committee meetings resume on March 10, when policy committees will have two weeks, and fiscal committees will have another week to act on bills from the opposite chamber.

Most modified

[2SSB 5147](#) started the session with a focus on allowing 50 school districts to adopt alternative school calendars. The bill is in the Senate Rules Committee. As passed by the Senate Ways & Means Committee last week, the bill would add several elements, including:

- Additional funding to assist school districts that provide up to three additional instructional days prior to the 2021-22 school year.
- A grant program to fund five days of summer learning re-engagement prior to the 2021-22 school year.
- A grant program to fund five additional instructional days prior to the 2021-22 school year, with a specific focus on programs that support the arts, STEM, civic engagement, and service-learning.
- A grant program to demonstrate a "balanced school calendar." The bill would provide a financial incentive of .025 per enrolled student FTE for participating districts. Up to 20 districts could participate in the program, ten from Eastern Washington and ten from Western Washington:
 - 10 districts under or equal to 2,000 student FTE;
 - 7 districts with student counts between 2,001 and 6,000; and
 - 3 districts with student counts between 6,001 and 10,000.

In addition, the Senate Ways & Means Committee passed [2SSB 5265](#) to the Rules Committee. The bill would require OSPI to administer a bridge year pilot program that would allow students in the graduating classes of 2021 and 2022 to defer graduation and take an additional year of courses at the student's high school, an institution of higher education, or a combination. The bill would also require districts to expunge any D or F grade from a participating student's transcript if the student takes the same course during their bridge year and completes the course with a higher grade. Why would a student participate in a bridge-year program? The bill would permit students in the pilot program to participate in extracurricular activities at their high school, subject to applicable eligibility rules and other policies required for student participation.

Graduation requirements still in play

This past week, the House passed [SHB 1162](#) by a vote of 72-26. The bill would allow high school students to graduate with 20 credits, as long as all 17 core credits have been completed, and would add another pathway for graduation – the performance exhibition. Bill sponsor Monica Stonier, D-Vancouver, had posted a floor amendment that would have stripped the bill of the high school credit reduction and turned the portfolio option into a demonstration project. Perhaps knowing she had the votes or that the amendment wouldn't win over bill opponents, she withdrew it, and the bill passed in the same form as it passed the House Education Committee. The battle will be in the Senate, where the Washington Roundtable and Association of Washington Business are expected to actively oppose.

The State Board of Education (SBE) met on February 25 to discuss draft rules granting waivers for credits and graduation pathways to students during emergencies. The draft rules would allow students to graduate with a waiver of up to four credits (including two core) and a graduation pathway. Feedback was mostly supportive, with the Washington Roundtable/Partnership for Learning asking for stronger "evidence" of student effort to ensure students graduate prepared for jobs or university. The SBE had a robust conversation and identified a couple of places where the draft rules could be clarified. The survey is still open on the waiver requirements, including questions about how many credits could be waived, whether graduation pathway options should be waived, and in what circumstances would it be okay to waive both credits and pathways. [Watch the short video](#) explaining the bill and waiver options. Click [here](#) to complete the survey. Here are the [draft rules](#). The SBE will meet on March 10 and 11 and plans to adopt emergency rules to implement [EHB 1121](#), which Governor Jay Inslee will sign on March 2 at 3:45 PM.

Closing the digital divide

Last week the House passed [ESHB 1336](#), which would authorize public utility districts, port districts, second-class cities, towns, and counties to provide retail telecommunications services. The bill passed the House by a 60-37 vote, with five Republicans voting in favor and two Democrats voting against. The Senate passed [2SSB 5383](#), which would authorize a public utility

district or port district to provide retail telecommunication services in an unserved area. It passed by a 43-3 margin. Why the big difference? The Senate bill would limit the service to only “unserved areas” and would allow private telecommunications companies to object to a PUD or port’s application to offer the broadband services in their service areas. My crystal ball says this bill is headed to a conference committee.

Another Senate bill, [ESSB 5439](#), which would direct the Department of Transportation to develop a policy to provide broadband owners information about planned projects along state highways to identify opportunities for coordinated installation, fared better, passing the Senate 45-0. Also less controversial than the retail sales bills, [2SHB 1263](#) would create a competitive grant program to award funding to eligible public and private entities located in rural counties for public facilities, including broadband. Federally recognized tribes and school districts were added to the bill as “eligible” entities.

[SSB 5357](#) would create a competitive grant program to increase broadband access in unserved areas of the state, with state funding used as a match to federal dollars to participate in federal broadband infrastructure programs; priority would be given to projects that serve distressed and rural areas of the state. Both 1263 and 5357 are in their respective Rules committees.

On the device side of the equation, [2SHB 1365](#) would require each Educational Service District to provide technology consultation, procurement, and training and would allow procurement to be performed in consultation and contract with the Department of Enterprise Services. The bill also would create a technology grant program at OSPI, subject to funding.

WSPTA Legislative Priorities

(all bills may be accessed [here](#))

Washington State PTA adopts a [two-year platform](#). Delegates at the 2020 Legislative Assembly adopted five issues as the highest priority issues, and three as “Also Supported.” [Videos](#) and handouts for members’ use in advocacy efforts this session are posted on the WSPTA Advocacy [page](#) under each position statement.

Bills that have passed their chamber (click [here](#) and type in the bill number):

- E2SHB 1050 would establish a maximum global warming potential threshold for hydrofluorocarbons (HFCs) used in new stationary air conditioning and stationary refrigeration, and would direct the state Department of Ecology to establish a global warming potential threshold for new ice rinks.
- SHB 1054 would establish requirements for tactics and equipment used by police officers. One of several police accountability bills, this legislation passed the House 54-43.
- HB 1085 would require school districts to create individual medical plans and conduct training in best practices for supporting students with seizure disorders.

- E3SHB 1091 would adopt a clean fuels standard in Washington state. The debate was long and passionate on both sides, taking up much of Saturday; the bill passed the House 52-46.
- SHB 1208 would make LAP program funding more flexible, but still allow school district use of LAP for academic and non-academic services.
- SHB 1225 would create the school-based health center program office within the Department of Health, including a grant program for planning, start-up costs, and ongoing operations costs.
- SHB 1273 would require school districts, private K-12 schools, charter schools, state-tribal compact schools, and public and private institutions of higher education to make menstrual hygiene products available at no cost to schools serving 6-12 graders by the beginning of the 2022-23 academic year.
- SHB 1302 would allow 9th graders to earn college credit on College in the High School courses.
- EHB 1342 would eliminate lunch copays for students who qualify for reduced-price lunches.
- SHB 1363 would require school districts to adopt, by the beginning of the 2021-22 school year, policies and procedures related to secondary traumatic stress that incorporate specified elements in the bill.
- SHB 1373 requires public schools to post contact information for behavioral health organizations on their website home pages and to post corresponding information on social media websites used by the school district by the 2021-22 school year.
- SSB 5030 would require school districts to develop and implement a written plan for a comprehensive school counseling program by the beginning of the 2022- 23 school year and require that school counselors implement the plan and spend at least 80 percent of their work time providing direct and indirect services to students.
- ESSB 5044 would add equity, diversity, inclusion, and anti-racism to existing cultural competency standards and training for school board directors, district staff, and school staff, and would require school districts to prioritize one of three state-funded professional learning days on these topics.
- E2SSB 5051 would, among other requirements, expand conduct for which the certification of a police officer or a corrections officer may be revoked. This is also one of the big police accountability bills.
- ESSB 5078 would prohibit the open carry of certain weapons at permitted public demonstrations (15 or more people) and the state capitol.
- SB 5184 would require a building point of contact in all K-12 public schools for students in foster care.
- SSB 5327 would establish a youth tip line reporting system. It passed the Senate 48-0.

Bills still in the Rules Committee:

- 2SHB 1092 would establish a program at WSU to collect, report, and publish information on law enforcement's use of force and other interactions with and incidents involving the public, and would require law enforcement agencies to collect and report information to WSU.
- SHB 1113 would direct school districts to file a truancy petition after a student's fifth unexcused absence and not later than the fifteenth unexcused absence and would authorize OSPI to modify school attendance requirements through rule.
- 2SHB 1139 would require school districts to take action to address lead in drinking water.
- SHB 1213 and 2SSB 5237 would create the Fair Start for Kids Act. These are similar bills that take a comprehensive approach to early learning and childcare. The bills delay the ECEAP entitlement date to the 2026-27 school year.
- SHB 1214 would require safety and security staff agreements, data collection, and training for educational service districts, school districts, and charter schools.
- 2SHB 1263 (described above).
- SHB 1320 is a comprehensive bill relating to modernizing, harmonizing, and improving the efficacy and accessibility of laws concerning civil protection orders.
- SHB 1332 would require county treasurers to grant a deferral of 2021 property tax payments for businesses that experienced an income loss of 25% when comparing revenues from 2019 to 2020.
- SHB 1354 would evaluate factors leading to youth suicide.
- SHB 1476 revise enrichment levy formulas in the 2022 and 2023 calendar years, requiring 2019-20 school year enrollments to be used in place of 2020- 21 or 2021-22 for each year 2019-20 enrollment is greater. Includes an “intent section” that the Legislature intends to stabilize funding due to enrollment decline.
- 2SHB 1477 would create a 988 system in Washington state.
- SHB 1484 would eliminate the operation and use of the first responder building mapping information system for schools and other public buildings and would remove references to the mapping system in safe school plan requirements.
- SHB 1504 would establish a behavioral health workforce pilot program and provide training support grants to community mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers.
- SSB 5078 would prohibit the manufacture, possession, distribution, importation, selling, offering for sale, purchasing, or transfer of large capacity magazines with the capability of holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition, unless the possession falls within one of the stated exceptions including prior possession.
- 2SSB 5128 would offer an alternative student transportation allocation formula of up to 70% or 80% and would allow funding to be used for expanded transportation services

when a school district, charter schools, and state-tribal compact school is providing remote instruction during certain local, state, and national emergencies.

- SB 5249 would require the Mastery-Based Learning Work Group to develop a Washington State profile of a high school graduate, in consultation with the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee and others.
- SSB 5321 would eliminate the requirement that a student sign a pledge to be eligible for the College Bound Scholarship and create a process for auto-enrolling eligible students. The bill also would create a new \$500 stipend for eligible students with family incomes between 65 and 100 percent median family income upon high school graduation.

Died in fiscal committee:

- HB 1058 would have modified the sales and use tax for cultural access programs by allowing the tax to be imposed by a councilmanic or commission authority.
- HB 1404 would have required universal screening procedures for students and placement in programs for highly capable students.
- HB 1500 would have removed requirements for reporting and reductions to levy collections related to audit findings that school districts used local enrichment revenues for unpermitted purposes.
- SB 5386 and SJR 8204 would have sought an amendment to the Constitution to allow 55 percent of voters voting to authorize school district bonds.