

January 17, 2022

And ... they're off!

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As expected, legislators “virtually” convened on January 10 for the start of what is shaping up to be a fast and flush short session. While some lawmakers made the trek to Olympia, committee hearings are being conducted virtually, and floor action is limited to only a few legislators identified by their caucus, and only those who pass a COVID test before they enter the chambers.

Also as expected, Governor Jay Inslee, Democrat, delivered his “State of the State” remotely from the state reception room in the Legislative Building. He stressed the investments he proposed in addressing homelessness, affordable housing, and salmon recovery. The Republican post-address commentary encouraged Democrats to take the positive revenue collections and return funds to taxpayers.

What wasn't expected was that last week's session began and moved at the quickest pace I've seen in my 30+ years of lobbying. With more than 600 bills filed in advance of January 10 and another 200 or so filed by the end of the week, I'm wondering if legislators realize they only have 60 days to get the work done? Keep in mind all bills from the 2021 session that didn't pass are eligible for action this session. Both the House and Senate held votes on the floor last week, voting on bills that had passed their chamber last year so they can get a boost towards the finish line.

The Big 3

Every year there are a lot of bills to watch. This year, three bill topics are at the top of everyone's K-12 list:

- Stabilizing enrollment to pre-pandemic levels ([SB 5563](#)/[HB 1590](#)).
- Increasing school staffing levels for school nurses, counselors, social workers, and psychologists ([SB 5595](#)/[HB 1985](#) and [HB 1664](#)).
- Right-sizing transportation funding to cover actual costs ([SB 5581](#) and [HB 1808](#)).

All three Senate bills were the topic of public hearings last week in the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee. The House Education Committee heard testimony on one of the school staffing bills – HB 1664. For the most part, testimony was positive and supportive. The House Appropriations Committee will take public testimony on Monday, January 17 on HB 1808; the committee hasn't scheduled HB 1590 yet.

As a reminder, the Governor's proposed budget included \$184 million in new funding for improving staffing ratios for school personnel working closely with student social, emotional, and physical health. He chose not to stabilize enrollment, instead capturing the funds appropriated in the 2021-23 operating budget and proposing to redistribute through grants back to districts for learning loss and recovery.

Washington State PTA Advocacy Committee members testified last week on school staffing and enrollment stabilization, one and two on the Top 5.

In addition, student and staff mental health is on many lawmakers' minds, with nearly 12 bills addressing the topic to varying degrees. It's definitely something we'll keep an eye on.

Sign in “Pro” Today on Simple Majority for Bonds

The House Education Committee will be hearing [HB 1226](#), lowering the threshold to pass school bonds from 60% to a simple majority on Tuesday at 8:00 AM. Washington State PTA has long had a position in support of simple majority for bonds and recently updated the resolution at the last WSPTA Legislative Assembly.

Washington state is one of only 11 states that require more than 50% of the vote. This extra requirement has cost school districts billions of dollars in funding for school construction and puts students' safety at risk from buildings that are overcrowded, unsafe due to age, earthquakes, and air quality hazards (including COVID) or simply don't meet the 21st century needs or design for all students.

Act now – it's simple, quick, and puts your voice on the record. Do it before 7:00 AM on the 18th:

- Click on this [link](#) and follow the prompts to select “Pro”, write your name, and add “Parent Advocate” in the Organization space.
- Fill in the rest of the information.
- Confirm you aren't a robot and click on “Submit Registration.”

And that's it! The process will take less than 90 seconds to complete. Your voice matters, and it matters to our legislators when they see parent support!

Click “PRO” for safe storage for guns and medications

Last session, Washington State PTA asked Rep. Lisa Callan to add safe storage of guns and medications to a bill she was sponsoring related to student mental health. Rep. Callan committed to introducing a separate bill this session, and HB 1759 is that bill. It requires school districts to publish links to resources provided by the Department of Health on school district web sites.

The bill is up for a public hearing in the House Education Committee on Thursday at 1:30 PM. Like simple majority for bonds, we're asking members of WSPTA (and encourage others too) to sign in as Pro on this bill by noon on Thursday.

Here's the [link](#) – follow the prompt to select “Pro,” write your name, and add “Parent Advocate” in the Organization space. Complete just like you did above. Done!

Advocacy in Action

- Natalya Yudkovsky [testified in favor](#) of SB 5563, stabilizing enrollment to pre-pandemic levels. The bill, which was heard in the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Committee, would offer much needed predictability and stability to school districts that will begin to see their state funding decline starting with their January disbursements from the state.
- Mike Uehara-Bingen joined Natalya later in the hearing [to speak in support](#) of [SB 5595](#), the Governor's proposal to increase staffing levels in all schools for school nurses, social workers, psychologists, and counselors. Mike also [testified in the House](#) Education Committee on [HB 1664](#), a similar bill that would increase school staffing, particularly for school nurses. These bills address WSPTA's top priority and are a step in the right direction.

The Week Ahead

(Schedule subject to change)

Monday, January 17

Law & Justice (Senate) - Virtual - 1/17 @ 9:30am

- SB 5217 - Public Hearing - Concerning assault weapons. (Remote testimony.)

Children, Youth & Families (House) - Virtual - 1/17 @ 1:30pm

- HB 1800 - Public Hearing - Increasing access to behavioral health services for minors. (Remote testimony.)
- HB 1890 - Public Hearing - Concerning the children and youth behavioral health work group. (Remote testimony.)

College & Workforce Development (House) - Virtual - 1/17 @ 1:30pm

- HB 1805 - Public Hearing - Concerning the opportunity scholarship program. (Remote testimony.)

Early Learning & K-12 Education (Senate) - Virtual - 1/17 @ 1:30pm

- SB 5581 - Exec Session - Addressing pupil transportation allocations.
- SB 5595 - Exec Session - Concerning prototypical school formulas for physical, social, and emotional support in schools.
- SB 5719 - Public Hearing - Concerning dual credit costs. (Remote testimony.)

Appropriations (House) - Virtual - 1/17 @ 3:30pm

- HB 1808 - Public Hearing - Concerning pupil transportation funding. (Remote testimony.)

Tuesday, January 18

Education (House) - Virtual - 1/18 @ 8:00am

- HB 1226 - Public Hearing - Concerning school district elections. (Remote testimony.)
- HJR 4200 - Public Hearing - Amending the Constitution to allow a simple majority of voters voting to authorize school district bonds. (Remote testimony.)

Higher Education & Workforce Development (Senate) - Virtual - 1/18 @ 1:30pm

- SB 5789 - Public Hearing - Creating the Washington career and college pathways innovation challenge program. (Remote testimony.)
- SB 5797 - Public Hearing - Concerning the opportunity scholarship program. (Remote testimony.)

Wednesday, January 19

Children, Youth & Families (House) - Virtual - 1/19 @ 8:00am

- HB 1883 - Public Hearing - Establishing a lifeline for youth and young adults who have experienced or are at risk of entering into public systems of care. (Remote testimony.)

Early Learning & K-12 Education (Senate) - Virtual - 1/19 @ 10:30am

- SB 5497 - Exec Session - Extending voting authority to student members on the state board of education.
- SB 5720 - Public Hearing - Providing student financial literacy education. (Remote testimony.)
- SB 5734 - Public Hearing - Addressing student physical education and health requirements. (Remote testimony.)
- SB 5735 - Public Hearing - Counting asynchronous instructional hours towards those required by the instructional program of basic education. (Remote testimony.)

Thursday, January 20

Education (House) - Virtual - 1/20 @ 1:30pm

- HB 1664 - Exec Session - Concerning prototypical school formulas for physical, social, and emotional support in schools.
- HB 1746 - Exec Session - Updating the 2015 report and recommendations for supporting student success through measuring and mitigating community risk and protective predictors since the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- HB 1759 - Public Hearing - Requiring school districts and other public education entities to make information from the department of health about substance use trends, overdose symptoms and response, and the secure storage of prescription drugs, over-the-counter medications, and firearms and ammunition, available through their websites and other communication resources. (Remote testimony.)
- HB 1833 - Public Hearing - Establishing an electronic option for the submission of household income information required for participation in school meals and programs. (Remote testimony.)
- HB 1834 - Public Hearing - Concerning student excused absences for mental health reasons. (Remote testimony.)
- HB 1878 - Public Hearing - Increasing public school participation in the community eligibility provision of the United States department of agriculture. (Remote testimony.)

Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation (Senate) - Virtual - 1/20 @ 1:30pm

- SB 5785 - Public Hearing - Concerning transitional food assistance. (Remote testimony.)

Appropriations (House) - Virtual - 1/20 @ 3:30pm

- HB 1699 - Public Hearing - Permitting individuals retired from the public employees retirement system, the teachers retirement system, and the school employees retirement system additional opportunities to work for a school district for up to 1,040 hours per school year while in receipt of pension benefits until July 1, 2025. (Remote testimony.)

Friday, January 14

Early Learning & K-12 Education (Senate) - Virtual - 1/21 @ 8:00am

- SB 5798 - Public Hearing - Increasing public school participation in the community eligibility provision of the United States department of agriculture. (Remote testimony.)
- SB 5820 - Public Hearing - Appointing the superintendent of public instruction. (Remote testimony.)
- SJR 8212 - Public Hearing - Removing the superintendent of public instruction as a statewide elected official. (Remote testimony.)

Education (House) - Virtual - 1/21 @ 10:00am

- HB 1226 - Exec Session - Concerning school district elections.
- HB 1536 - Public Hearing - Establishing regional apprenticeship programs through educational service districts. (Remote testimony.)
- HB 1611 - Public Hearing - Advancing equity in programs for highly capable students. (Remote testimony.)
- HB 1760 - Public Hearing - Expanding access to dual credit programs. (Remote testimony.)
- HB 1867 - Public Hearing - Concerning dual credit program data. (Remote testimony.)
- HJR 4200 - Exec Session - Amending the Constitution to allow a simple majority of voters voting to authorize school district bonds.

Human Services, Reentry & Rehabilitation (Senate) - Virtual - 1/21 @ 10:30am

- SB 5824 - Public Hearing - Providing dependent youth with financial education and support. (Remote testimony.)