



TSTA Legislative Session Update, February 1, 2013

House Committees Appointed

On Thursday, Speaker Straus appointed House committees. Senate committees were appointed earlier. A list of the House Public Education Committee and Senate Education committee is provided below, as well as links to complete information about each House and Senate member, including their biography and the school districts located in their legislative district.

For all House Committee rosters go to: http://www.house.state.tx.us/_media/pdf/committee.pdf

For all Senate committee rosters, go to: <http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/senate/Commit.htm>

House Public Education Committee

Jimmie Don Aycock, Chair, R - Killeen – Former School Board Member

Dr. Alma Allen, Vice-Chair, D – Houston – Retired Educator, Former SBOE member

John Davis, R – Houston

Joe Deshotel, D – Beaumont

Harold Dutton Jr., D – Houston

Mike Villarreal, D – San Antonio

Marsha Farney, R – Georgetown

Dan Huberty, R – Houston, Former School Board member

Ken King, R - Houston

Bennett Ratliff, R – Coppell – Former School Board Member

Justin Rodriguez, D – San Antonio – Former School Board Member and City Councilman

For House members' contact information, biography, and school districts represented, go to the following website, click on the member and the member's page will appear with links to all that information.

member<http://www.house.state.tx.us/members/>

Senate Committee on Education

Sen. Dan Patrick (R) – Houston, Chair

Sen. Eddie Lucio, Jr. (D-) – Brownsville, Vice Chair

Sen. Donna Campbell (R+) – New Braunfels

Sen. Robert Duncan (R) – Lubbock

Sen. Ken Paxton (R) – McKinney

Sen. Kel Seliger (R) – Amarillo

Sen. Larry Taylor (R+) – Friendswood

Sen. Leticia Van de Putte (D) – San Antonio

Sen. Royce West (D) – Dallas

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<http://www.senate.state.tx.us/75r/Senate/Members.htm>

Senate Education Committee Meets on CSCOPE, 15% EOC requirement

On Thursday, the Senate Committee on Education met to hear Senate Bill 135 and discuss CSCOPE.

Senate Bill 135 by Sen. Patrick allows district's to opt out of the requirement that end of course exams must account for 15% of a student's final grade. The bill passed unanimously out of the Committee.

The committee heard heated discussions regarding CSCOPE. The CSCOPE Director, Dr. Wade Labay, was grilled by the Committee for CSCOPE's lack of transparency. CSCOPE has required teachers to sign a non-disclosure agreement that could result in a criminal penalty if a teacher discloses any of the curriculum to parents or the public. The Director assured the Committee that CSCOPE was working toward transparency, a claim that was met with skepticism by committee members..

Most of the public testimony, and comments from Committee members present, came from critics that criticized CSCOPE curriculum for mentioning the origins of socialism and including information about the tenets of Islam. They clamored for an isolationist view of the United States and decried critical thinking or deductive reasoning in the classroom. This discussion resembled a Don McLeroy-led SBOE hearing on science and social studies TEKS – in a word, frightening.

TSTA met with Sen. Patrick before the hearing and voiced our concerns over the lack of academic freedom that occurs when districts mandate the use of CSCOPE is used as a source lesson plans instead of as one of providing it as one of many tools a teacher may use in developing course curriculum.

Patrick Plans to File Bills on “Choice” (Vouchers) and Accountability

In the near future, we expect Sen. Patrick to file bills addressing the accountability system and the privatization of public education. Sen. Patrick has voiced his enthusiasm for the expansion of

charter schools, parent trigger laws, traditional vouchers, and vouchers designed as tax credits – which we call the “**voucher tax loophole.**”

We expect to see all of these concepts in bills filed by Sen. Patrick in the next week or so. Sen. Patrick also intends to file a bill that does away with the minimum, recommended, and distinguished diplomas in favor of a universal foundation diploma which will have endorsements in business and industry, arts and humanities, science and technology, and distinguished achievement.

Bipartisan Accountability/Testing Reform Bills Filed in Senate and House

Democratic Sen. Leticia Van de Putte recently filed Senate Bill 240 and Republican Rep. Diane Patrick filed an identical companion bill as House Bill 640. SB240/HB640 drops the 15% requirement; drops the ALG II and physics requirement for the recommended and advanced diploma; gets rid of EOC exams in ALG II, geometry, biology, chemistry, physics, ELA I & II, world geography and history, and US history; allows students to satisfy some EOC requirements by completing dual credit courses; prohibits schools from using EOC exams in calculation of class rank; the bills gets rid of the cumulative score requirement; allows students to use an AP score of 2 and SAT and ACT scores in lieu of EOC assessments. This bipartisan proposal by members respected for their knowledge about education is one of many that will be filed this session to change the STAAR test version of accountability.

House to Begin Budget Hearings Next Week

House Appropriations Chair Jim Pitts announced that the House will begin hearings on the budget Monday morning. We will keep you updated when the hearings on the education budget are scheduled.