

ewaldatthecapitol

February 13, 2015

The Pace Is Picking Up

Even though only one bill was passed through one chamber this week, the capitol has been buzzing with activity. A total of 422 bills were introduced by both the House and Senate, the Senate passed a funding deficiency bill, and the House passed its legislative rules for the session. Committees have started passing top priority bills on to the next committee, and the long nights of floor debates are not too far off.

The University of Minnesota Board of Regents Election

The Board of Regents is the governing body of the University of Minnesota; regents vote on major policy decisions affecting the University system. The Board is comprised of 12 members, with eight members representing each of Minnesota's congressional districts and four at-large members. The elections are staggered, so one-third of the board is elected every two years. This year there are five openings because a board member, David Larson from the 3rd congressional district, passed away last fall with two years remaining on his term (whoever is elected will serve out the remaining two years of the term). The House of Representatives and the Senate hold a joint committee (made up of members from both House and Senate committees on Higher Education) to nominate candidates for each open seat. Once candidates are nominated by the joint committee, they are voted on by the full legislature in a joint floor session. Typically an open seat

will have one candidate nominated — but this year, due to the divided legislature, there are two seats with multiple candidates to be voted on by the full body. Winners are determined by a simple majority, expected to fall along party lines. With Democrats currently occupying 101 seats to the Republicans' 100, it should be a very narrow vote margin.

Teacher Layoff Policies

One of the top legislative priorities for House Republicans this year will be enacting legislation that would require public school district officials and teachers to negotiate local policies for layoffs and other staffing decisions. Currently, Minnesota has a law which states that districts may negotiate staffing policies, and if they don't come to an agreement then there is a default policy based on seniority for teachers (this policy is known as "Last In, First Out" or LIFO). This law would effectively change that default position so that each district has a method for retaining teachers they see as most effective. It would also require districts to have a layoff policy already in place, and that teacher evaluations must be considered in these assessments. Changing the default LIFO policy has support from school administrators as well as many education reform advocates, but has drawn concern from Education Minnesota, the biggest teacher union in the state. Rep. Jenifer Loon (R-Eden Prairie) said the mission of the bill is to ensure quality teaching for students, but opponents of the bill say that using teacher evaluations as a merit system

They said it:

"Making sure that every one of our children has the best available teachers in the classroom is a goal that I know we all share."

- Rep. Jenifer Loon (R-Eden Prairie)

Ewald Government Relations Team

Feel free to contact any member of our team:

David Ewald
651-290-6276
davide@ewald.com

Nick de Julio
651-290-6286
nickd@ewald.com

Valerie Dosland
651-265-7857
valeried@ewald.com

Eric Ewald
651-290-6266
erice@ewald.com

Patrick Lobejko
651-290-7473
patrickl@ewald.com

Jess Myers
651-290-7465
jessm@ewald.com

Becca Pryse
651-265-7858
beccap@ewald.com

Katie Wilkerson
651-288-3427
katiew@ewald.com

Owen Wirth
651-288-3438
owenw@ewald.com

Key Legislative Contact Info

House Information Office
651-296-2146

Senate Information Office
651-296-0504

State Legislature Website
www.leg.mn

Ewald  Consulting

may lead to unintended consequences, and that the teacher evaluations were meant for teacher improvement as opposed to being a punitive measure.

[HF 2](#) was heard in the House Education Innovation Policy Committee and passed to its next stop, Education Finance Committee. Sen. Terri Bonoff (DFL-Minnetonka) is the chief author of the Senate companion, [SF 473](#), which has yet to be heard in committee.

Loan Forgiveness for Rural Healthcare Workers

This week the House heard a bill ([HF 614](#), Rep. Dave Baker, R-Willmar) in its Aging and Long-Term Care Policy Committee that would provide for loan forgiveness to licensed practical

nurses who work full-time in underserved parts of the state. Current law allows for loan forgiveness after three years of working in rural areas, but the bill being considered would reduce that time to two years. A testifier supporting the bill stated that many new graduates begin their careers in nursing homes but are typically lured away within 18 months due to better-paying job offers from hospitals and other facilities. Supporters of the bill say that decreasing the threshold to two years instead of three will incentivize nurses to stay in the rural health industry longer.