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Legislative News February 17, 2012

You did it again! Senate Education passes over SB 122!

Thanks to your quick responses and excellent advocacy, yesterday morning Chairman Ken Winters (R-Murray) passed over consideration of his own bill, SB 122. The bill proposes significant changes in the way teachers would attain a continuing contract, requiring them to apply after their fourth year of teaching and be recommended by a 4/5 vote of a five person committee. Even teachers who are recommended could still be denied a continuing contract by the superintendent, who would have the last word. Teachers who don't attain continuing status at the end of their fourth year could reapply two more times. But if a teacher was not approved for continuing status by the superintendent by the end of his or her sixth year of teaching, the teacher could not be rehired by the district at all and would have to move to a new district (if possible) and start the process again. There would be no appeal process at any step of the way.

I signed up to testify against the bill at the Senate Education Committee meeting on Thursday morning. **I was the only president of any statewide association who asked to testify on behalf of teachers.**

As soon as the meeting convened, Senator Winters told the members of the Senate Education Committee that he had "received additional information from the U.S. Department of Education" that convinced him to postpone consideration of the bill. Whatever his stated reason, we know the decision was due in large part to the phone calls you made and the emails you sent Wednesday night and Thursday morning. The Democrat senators on the committee were with you from the start, and were encouraged by the messages they received from you. Thanks to Senators R.J. Palmer (D-Winchester), Walter Blevins (D-Morehead), Denise Harper Angel (D-Louisville), Gerald Neal (D-Louisville), and Johnny Ray Turner (D-Prestonsburg) for their unwavering support. We also particularly want to thank the KEA members who are constituents of Senators Jared Carpenter (R-Berea) and Jimmy Higdon (R-Lebanon) for your good work.

Legislators respond when they know you are informed and are watching. Please take time very soon to call and thank the same legislators you lobbied yesterday.

Instead of tackling SB 122 (which they knew was a hot topic among their teacher constituents), Senate Education heard these items instead:

SB 136, sponsored by Sen. Katie Stine (R-Southgate). This bill will reduce from 30 to 15 the number of days a school district must post a vacancy before it can be filled. KEA opposes this bill because the 30 day requirement is so often ignored now.

SJR 88, sponsored by Chairman Ken Winters (R-Murray). This joint resolution will require the Department of Education to present a proposal for a statewide evaluation plan for teachers and administrators to the Interim Joint Education Committee by November 15, 2012. Senator Winters told his committee that he had substitute language that would require a report on progress by November 15, 2012 with a final report that would include the proposed plan by November 15, 2013. Although KEA believes the timeline is too short to adequately vet a new statewide evaluation process, the proposed changes to SJR 88 are more acceptable than the original.

SB 136 and SJR 88 with committee substitute will now go to the full Senate for consideration.

Black Friday in solidarity with educators in Virginia

We received some good news from Virginia on Thursday; the Senate in that state defeated the bill that would have stripped tenure for certified teachers. But that's not the only adverse action faced by educators in Virginia and in many other states; school employees across the country are suffering at the hands of legislators and governors who are out to kill public education and silence the voice of the opposition. So although this was a piece of good news, we are still wearing black today to show our support for Virginia, Wisconsin, Ohio, New Jersey, Tennessee, Arizona . . . the list goes on and on. Check out the Facebook page for the VEA "Black Friday" event at <http://www.facebook.com/#!/events/209373752495351/>

Sincerely,

Sharron K. Oxendine

KEA President



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