



**ASSOCIATION OF INDEPENDENT
SCHOOLS IN NEW ENGLAND**

Massachusetts Legislative Update – April 2016

Legislative Calendar

We are in the second year of the two-year cycle and formal sessions cease at midnight on July 31, 2016. Joint Rule 10 Day was Wednesday, March 16th and thousands of bills are now being processed in the offices of the House and Senate Clerk. Most matters will be “ordered to a study,” which marks the end of the legislative road. Others will be recommended favorably to move onto another committee while some will be redrafted before being shipped out. We are still awaiting official confirmation on the next stop for many bills, which appears to be taking longer than usual.

The House Committee on Ways and Means is preparing its budget and debate will begin on Monday, April 25th. The Senate will take up its own appropriations bill during the final week of May after a mid-month release. House and Senate conferees will hope to negotiate a compromise before the end of June, so a budget can be sent to the Governor prior to the beginning of the next fiscal year, July 1.

Political Environment

Relations between the House and Senate continue to show signs of distrust and a lack of coordination. The Senate has been very active and quick to embrace the body’s progressive nature while the House has been the moderate branch, and more often aligned with Governor Baker. This was evident during the Joint Rule 10 exercise, where very few executive sessions were held in favor of polls being conducted via email through staff. An executive session is held to vote on the recommendations of the Chairmen for each bill that had a public hearing and has always been an opportunity to learn, see, and hear directly what the recommendations are and how the votes break down. With the polling, it has been a greater challenge to get the information from committee staff and many refuse to share the actual results.

We expect the Senate to continue approving legislation on a regular basis under Senate President Stan Rosenberg’s shared leadership model. Issues like pay equity, gender discrimination, minimum wage and family leave are all possibilities to pass the Senate in some form. However, the House will be far more judicious and deliberative on many of these and we expect will not advance.

Charter Schools

The Senate yesterday debated and passed a bill (S.2203) that was developed over several weeks by a team of Senators who were tasked with the job of writing a bill that could pass the Senate. This was a difficult task given the lack of support for the Governor’s bill to expand the number of charters, and the results were panned by charter supporters. The lead proponents of the ballot question have stated that they do not support the Senate legislation and that would not stop them from continuing toward the ballot. The bill will now go to the House were a different outcome is expected, if they take the bill up at all. <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/189/Senate/S2203>



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College Savings Tax Deduction

Legislation to provide a state tax deduction for contributions to college savings plans has cleared its initial committee and is generating some interest on Beacon Hill. AICUM is the lead organization and the bill limits the personal income tax college tuition deduction to MA residents only to offset the cost of the new deduction for college savings plans. It's the first time the bill received a favorable report by the Joint Committee on Revenue and the bill enjoys wide support. However, it is unclear if the House wants to send a "money bill" over to the Senate this session. <https://malegislature.gov/Bills/189/Senate/S1468>

Concussion Study – High School Sports (H.3994)

This legislation seeks to establish a special commission to study concussions that occur as a result of varsity sports in public and private high schools and make a report to the Legislature. There is a seat for "a representative of private school athletic programs" on the 9-member commission. The bill was redrafted and reported favorably by the Joint Committee on Public Health and is now pending before the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. This Committee must make a recommendation by April 27.

Social Media Password Protection (H.4143)

This legislation would prohibit schools from requiring the disclosure of passwords to social media accounts as a condition of acceptance or participation in any activities. The bill was a redraft and is now pending before the House Committee on Steering, Policy and Scheduling. The next step is for the bill to be added to the House Calendar.