Busy week culminates with a sea of red at the Capitol

On Friday, over a thousand education employees from Cabell, Clay, Mason, Lincoln and Wayne counties decided to walk off the job and come to the capitol to meet with legislators. They were joined by education employees from counties closed due to weather or other causes. In addition, counties that had school continued their walk-ins, local rallies and informational picketing.

The large and noisy crowd actually delayed the Senate from conducting business because of the noise level. We have posted some video clips from the day on our Dedicated Teachers Facebook page. Check them out.

Thanks to everyone for your engagement. Continuing to contact your legislators is vital as we move into the last half of the session. Keep informed by following our Dedicated Teachers Facebook page and visiting the WVEA website regularly.

Statewide Day of Action to be held Saturday at the Capitol

Just a reminder that the Statewide Day of Action will be held at 1:00 pm on the Capitol steps (Kanawha River side). Education employees, members of other unions, parents and other supporters will hold the rally from 1 – 2 pm.

The event will be held rain or shine. Come prepared and continue the sea of red at the Capitol on Saturday.

PEIA public hearings have huge crowds

Big crowds greeted the PEIA Finance Board members at each of the three public hearing locations this week. PEIA Director Cheatham presented a plan that removed the Total Family Income provision, eliminated the Go365 requirement, and reintroduced the FY18 plan to be carried over into FY19.

Such a moratorium will cost an additional $29 million. The House Finance Committee originated HB 4620 (PEIA appropriation) to finance the additional money needed for the plan in FY19. The bill is a supplementary, one-time appropriations bill that would take $29 million from the state's rainy-day fund and direct it to PEIA. The committee passed the bill on a voice vote and it now on the House floor awaiting passage.

The PEIA Finance Board is scheduled to meet on February 20th to officially adopt the changes and revert back to the FY18 plan for the 2018-19 school year.

SB 267 – Salary bill

On Monday, SB 267, the Governor's pay raise bill, was on its second reading/amendment stage in the House. Multiple amendments were offered to the bill as Democrats in the House attempted to increase the amount of the raise. Below is the breakdown of each amendment:

**Miley amendment:** This amendment called for a teacher raise of 3% over each of the next 3 years, totally a 9% raise. This amendment was supported by the Democratic Caucus. Delegate Miley suggested that the money for the 9% raise can come from a number of sources including: commerce and tourism moneys, not eliminating the inventory tax, moneys from sports betting (proposed legislation), an increase to the severance tax, or an additional tax on tobacco. This amendment failed with 42 Yeas and 58 Nays. The votes can be found, here.

**McGeehan and Folk amendment:** This amendment would frontload the pay increase for teachers, so that instead
of a 2%-1%-1%-1% increase as proposed by the Finance Committee the pay increase would come to a 3%-1%-1%-1% over three years. The amount would be the same overall as the governor’s proposal but it would increase the first year’s pay and shave off the last year’s pay. This amendment also failed with 50 Yeas and 50 Nays, failing to get a majority of votes. The votes can be found, here.

After nearly three hours of debate, and amendments, Senate Bill 267 was passed with the amounts of 2%-1%-1%-1% for professionals and 2% - 1% for service professionals.

On third reading, Senate Bill 267 passed 98-1 (Fluharty was the no; with Blair not voting). Since this bill (2%-1%-1%-1%) is different than the bill passed by the Senate (1% for each of the next 5 years), it will have go back to the Senate for approval (and possibly a conference committee) before heading to the Governor for any final approval.

As this Update is posted, the Senate has indicated that it will not accept the House version of SB 267.

Certification bill lowers standards for Alternative Certification

HB 4407 (alternative certification) moved through the House this week. The purpose of House Bill 4407 is to remove one of the requirements for eligibility for an alternative program teacher certificate. The bill proposed that an individual seeking alternative certification no longer be required to have an academic major or occupational area the same as or similar to subject matter that he or she would be hired to teach.

House Education Chair Espinosa referred to the requirement to have a degree in the same field in which the prospective teacher would teach as a hang-up to gaining certification.

After nearly an hour of debate, HB 4407 was approved on a vote of 50 to 48 with two delegates absent. The bill goes to the Senate Education Committee for further consideration. See roll call vote here.

Additional education related bills on the move this week

SB 319 – GPA PROMISE Scholarship. As amended, the bill would eliminate the requirement for students to achieve at least a 3.0 grade-point average in high school to qualify for the PROMISE scholarship. It started out as a bill to eliminate the requirement for home-schooled students to obtain an equivalent to a high school diploma but members of the committee decided the fairest way to handle the situation would be to eliminate the requirement for a 3.0 GPA. The bill now goes to the full Senate.

SB 465 – Child Abuse. The purpose of the bill is to simplify mandatory reporting requirements in cases of suspected child abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse. It also reduces the time for reporting from 48 hours to 24 hours. This bill is now in Senate Judiciary.

HB 4619 – Teacher induction and professional growth. The purpose of the bill is to direct 20 percent of the growth in local share money to be used to support the implementation of comprehensive systems for teacher and leader induction and professional growth. The new provisions also would include the factors to be taken into account in making allocations to the counties, provide that a district may not receive less than 2016-2017 allocation from the line items for Teacher Mentors and Principal Mentorships, and require that the funding allocated is to be used for implementation of comprehensive systems for teacher and leader induction and professional growth. This bill now moves to House Finance.

SB 494 – Association officers. This bill would consider members of the State Teachers Retirement System absent while serving as officers with statewide professional associations, passed today in the Senate Pensions Committee. This bill was introduced in committee and after the first walkout earlier in the month and is a punitive punishment for the action. It is on 1st reading on the Senate floor.