September 23, 2019

Legislative UPDATE
Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education

The House of Representatives and the Senate are both in voting session this week, Monday through Wednesday.

With legislative session underway, the chancellor is discussing during legislative meetings, just as he is doing on on campus, where the State System is and where it is going.

For example, in his latest blog post, Chancellor Greenstein reflected on a few thoughts from his experiences over the last year:

- The transformative powers of public higher education are real, they are potent, and they are alive and well in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.
• Our challenges are real—some of them severe. But while they may be a catalyst for our transformation, they are not its raison d’être.
• Our universities are “legacy centric” for good reason—to preserve the quality, integrity, and value of our students’ experiences. But we can also be agile.
• Progress along our transformational journey will require us to pay attention to our culture and to one another.

Find a full schedule of campus visits on the Chancellor Dan webpage.

---

**Senate**

**Session & Committee Activity**

[Senate Session Days] [Watch Session Live] [Senate Calendars] [Senate Committee Meeting Schedule]

The Senate convenes this afternoon, September 23rd, at 1:00 p.m.

The full chamber could consider this week:

• **HB 265**: Amends the Public School Code, in transfers of credits between institutions of higher education, further providing for definitions, for duties of public institutions of higher education and state-related institutions, for Transfer and Articulation Oversight Committee, and for duties of department. Provides language regarding career and technical education. Provides for the establishment of an occupational advisory committee for each career and technical education program or cluster of related career and technical education programs offered by an area vocational-technical school or school district. Adds a new section providing for the PAsmart Online Career Resource Center as a central online clearinghouse to be made available on a publicly accessible Internet website maintained by the Department of Labor and Industry. Also adds a new article establishing the Schools-to-Work Program to award grants on a competitive basis to support the establishment or enhancement of workforce development partnerships between schools, employers, organizations or associations to create employment and training pathways.

• **SB 439**: Amends the Enforcement Officer Disability Benefits Law, further providing for disability benefits and for definitions, and adding among others, campus police officers employed by a participating university.

Looking at the Executive Nominations Calendar, we are reminded that students Aven Bittinger, Nicole Dunlap, and Alex Fefolt await Senate confirmation before serving on the State System’s Board of Governors.
In committee activity, the **Senate Education Committee** meets today at 11 a.m. to hold a public hearing on food in education. [Watch live...](#)

Although the agenda appears basic and secondary-focused, additional meetings could potentially be held with a post-secondary focus. "First Lady Frances Wolf [recently] hosted a roundtable discussion [at Dixon University Center] with Education Secretary Pedro Rivera, Human Services Secretary Teresa Miller, higher education professionals, students, and anti-hunger advocates to discuss ways to address hunger and food insecurity on college campuses." [Read more...](#)

The **Senate State Government Committee** meets tomorrow to consider these bills of interest:

- **SB 470**: An Act providing for an inventory of State-owned assets for the development of mobile broadband services in unserved areas and underserved areas of this Commonwealth.
- **HB 305**: An Act providing for an inventory of State-owned assets & county-owned assets for the development of mobile broadband services in unserved areas and underserved areas of this Commonwealth & for the statewide mobile radio & microwave system.

Last week, State Sen. Mike Folmer whose senatorial district encompasses Lebanon County and parts of Dauphin and York counties resigned from office. PennLive reported: "The election code provides Fetterman 10 days to set the date from when the resignation takes effect, which was [September 18]. The special election has to be at least 60 days from the resignation date, which eliminates the possibility of holding it on the same day as the Nov. 5 general election."

---

**House of Representatives**

**Session & Committee Activity**

[House Session Days](#) | [Watch Session Live](#) | [House Calendars](#) | [House Committee Meeting Schedule](#)

The chamber convenes today at 1 p.m.

Bills of interest on the Floor Calendar include:

- **HB 1069**: Amends Title 65 (Public Officers), in open meetings, further providing for public notice and providing for notification of agency business required and exceptions.

In committee activity this week, the **House State Government Committee** meets to consider:

- **HB 1803**: Amends the PennWATCH Act, further providing for searchable budget database and for administration, to include information on each settlement paid to an individual or employee of
a commonwealth agency as a result of an action taken by an employee of a commonwealth agency.

The **House Veterans Affairs and Emergency Preparedness Committee** approved last week legislation providing for first responder loan forgiveness and tuition assistance.

"House Bill 1786 would establish The First Responder Loan Forgiveness Program, which would forgive up to $16,000 in loans to indebted college graduates after they have served four years with an emergency medical services agency, a volunteer fire company or a volunteer rescue company." [Read more...](#)

House Bill 1773 would establish the Tuition Assistance for Active Volunteers Program through which "an active member of a volunteer fire company or EMS agency, who attends an approved institution of higher learning, would be eligible to receive tuition assistance." [Read more...](#)

We are working with the prime sponsor of the latter bill to ensure this well-intended program does not create a burden to participating institutions. The bill’s current definition of “tuition” is limited to the System’s Board-approved tuition rate (plus tech fee). In general, this language is problematic with the Board’s new tuition policy, where universities, e.g., IUP, may charge different rates and could result in certain universities having to fill the gap.

---

**Bill Tracking Report**

The following information is updated during legislative session weeks.

**In the House:**

**HB 518:** Amends the Private Licensed Schools Act, further providing for definitions and for license fees; and for multibranch training schools. Last Action: 09-18-19 H Final Passage (Vote: Y:199/N: 0)

**HB 1773:** Amends Title 35 (Health & Safety), in emergency management services, providing for tuition assistance for active volunteers; & establishing the Active Volunteer Tuition Assistance Program & Fund. Last Action: 09-23-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar

**HB 1786:** Amends Title 35 (Health & Safety), in incentives for municipal volunteers of fire companies & nonprofit emergency medical services agencies, establishing the First Responder Loan Forgiveness Program; and making editorial changes. Last Action: 09-23-19 H Set on the Tabled Calendar

**Co-sponsorship Memos:**

**HCO2566:** Requires annual hazard situation training at state-owned and state-related universities. Last Action: 09-17-19 H Filed
This update is provided as a courtesy of the Office of the Chancellor as a preview of upcoming legislative activity and a review of action on legislative issues of interest to the State System. The Legislative UPDATE is distributed during legislative session weeks.

Jennifer Hoover
Director of Governmental Relations
jhoover@passhe.edu
(717) 720-4021