April 6, 2020

**Legislative UPDATE**

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education

The state Senate and House are scheduled to return to session this afternoon, but few lawmakers from either chamber are expected to be at the Capitol. Each chamber is operating under recently adopted rules created to allow for remote voting.

Since Gov. Wolf announced his 'non-essential' business shutdown, Republican leaders and other legislators have been pushing back, calling upon the governor to allow construction in Pennsylvania to resume. It is expected the primary focus of this week's legislative efforts may be focused in this regard.

Meanwhile, as the state is facing some of the most challenging problems it has ever faced, the General Assembly is looking to craft a state budget. Already, however, the entirety of the state’s surplus has been eliminated, and the Independent Fiscal Office estimates that the outbreak of the COVID-19 virus reduced March revenue collections by $200 million.

State System universities acted to transition quickly from largely face-to-face to wholly remote forms of instruction. They have worked to maintain operations in a manner consistent with the Governor’s orders while protecting and sustaining those students who must remain on campuses. There is a great deal more to do to see State System universities and students through this crisis.

As universities are assessing the impact it has had on their operations, the Office of the Chancellor is working to share with lawmakers the financial impacts of the pandemic. The cumulative impact of lost
receipts and increased costs in this semester alone is an estimated $70-100 million.

That said, it is critical for the General Assembly to provide as much funding for public higher education as possible so System universities may successfully chart a path forward into the post-pandemic future for themselves and their students.

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**Senate**

**Session & Committee Activity**

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

The Senate is expected to convene in session this afternoon, beginning at 1:00 p.m.. The chamber has been in recess to the call of the pro tempore since Wednesday, March 25.

"With the coronavirus outbreak dealing a serious blow to the state's bottom line... and [putting] lawmakers in the difficult position of trying to pass a budget without knowing how badly tax revenues have been affected by the economic fallout of the COVID-19 crisis," the Senate Appropriations Committee is scheduled to meet today to begin considering state budget related legislation, including:

- **SB 1050** (Browne): An Act to provide from the General Fund for the expenses of the Executive, Legislative and Judicial Departments, the public debt and the public schools, including the State System of Higher Education, for the fiscal year July 1, 2020 to June 30, 2021.

- **SB 1060** (Browne): A supplement to the act to accept grant of Public Lands, by the US, to several states, for endowment of Agricultural Colleges, making appropriations for carrying the same into effect; and providing for basis for payments of appropriation.

- **SB 1061** (Browne): A supplement to the University of Pittsburgh - Commonwealth Act making appropriations for carrying the same into effect; and providing for a basis for payments, for method of accounting and for certain fiscal information disclosure.

- **SB 1062** (Browne): A supplement to the Temple University - Commonwealth Act making an appropriation for carrying the same into effect; providing for a basis for payments; for method of accounting and for certain fiscal information disclosure.

- **SB 1063** (Browne): A supplement to the Lincoln University - Commonwealth Act making an appropriation for carrying the same into effect; & providing for a basis for payments, for method
of accounting and for certain fiscal information disclosure.

- **SB 1093** (Browne): An Act providing for the capital budget for the fiscal year 2020-2021.

In other activity, the Senate State Government Committee is scheduled to meet off the floor to consider legislation (**SB 1097**) that would provide for the remote notarization of documents.

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**House of Representatives**

**Session & Committee Activity**

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

The chamber gavels in this afternoon at 1:00 p.m. and again Tuesday at 11:00 a.m.

Upon convening, Representatives-elect [Bonner](#), [Davanzano](#) and [Tomlinson](#) will take their oaths of office as state representatives of the 8th, 58th, and 18th legislative districts, respectively. Each is serving his or her first term after assuming office following the March 17 special election.

This week's floor and committee voting activity includes a variety of Coronavirus-related legislation, including potentially:

- **HB 2400** (Turzai): Allows all public and private construction activities to be undertaken that adhere to mitigation measures set forth by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to protect workers and mitigate the spread of the COVID-19 virus. The legislation was introduced and referred on Friday, April 3, to the committee on House State Government.

Another bill, **SB 327** (Argall), requiring the Department of General Services to conduct an annual survey of state facility usage, could be amended by the House to address the closure of businesses. If passed as amended, the bill would be returned to the Senate for concurrence vote. Already the prime sponsor has called for increased transparency from the Governor’s office as local workers struggle to understand his orders for non-essential employers to close. [Read more...](#)

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**Bill Tracking Report**

The following information is updated during legislative session weeks.
In the House:

**HCO3408** (Dush): Directs the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee to review agency programs for redundancies. *Last Action*: 03-31-20 H Filed

**HCO3416** (Wheatley): Provides additional wages to essential workers, prohibits employers from requiring employees to use their paid time off directly before being laid off, and suspends all mortgage and rent payments for those who lost their job. *Last Action*: 04-01-20 H Filed

In the Senate:

**SCO1481** (Arnold): Requiring DCED to issue a waiver to all public and private construction activities that can adhere to social distancing practices and other mitigation measures. *Last Action*: 03-30-20 S 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.

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