



Pennsylvania's **STATE SYSTEM** of Higher Education

September 21, 2020

Legislative UPDATE

Pennsylvania's State System of Higher Education

The Senate is in the state Capitol this week, convening in session today and again Tuesday and Wednesday. Meanwhile, the House is adjourned until September 29th.

According to Capitolwire, [t]he question remains will [session activity] include a state Election Code bill[?]" Recently, "the [state Supreme Court](#) granted a request... to order a three-day extension of Pennsylvania's Election Day deadline to count mailed-in ballots."

Additionally, legislators are awaiting Gov. Tom Wolf's action on [HB 2787](#), legislation that would give school districts local control on school sports. Today is the last day for the Governor's action. If he vetoes the bill as he said he would, a veto override is likely to be scheduled.

The General Assembly also must still yet complete a full 2020-21 fiscal year budget. In May, it had passed a five-month stopgap budget. "The state now has a deficit of \$3.2 billion deficit for the fiscal year with \$1.8

billion of that deficit from delaying the tax revenue due date and the rest coming from economic loss," said Amy Gill, deputy secretary for tax policy, Department of Revenue, before the House Finance Committee last week. "The economic damage was realized in the May forecast for 2020-2021, with gross state product and retail sales both down 8 percent, as well as a 10 percent decrease in taxes on wages and salaries. Additionally, the unemployment level is estimated to stay under the 2019 level until 2024 and the gross state product is not slated to return to the 2019 level until 2022," she told the committee.

Senate

Session & Committee Activity

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The Senate convenes this afternoon at 1:00 p.m. The chamber has stood in recess since September 9th.

These bills of interest are potentially before the full Senate:

- [HB 2348](#) (Causer): Amends Title 64 (Public Authorities & Quasi-Public Corporations), in Commonwealth Financing Authority, for Unserved High-Speed Broadband Funding Program; establishing the Unserved High-Speed Broadband Funding Program Account.
- [HB 2438](#) (Owlett): Amends Title 68 (Real and Personal Property), providing for broadband services.
- [SB 487](#) (Laughlin): Amends the Breach of Personal Information Notification Act, prohibiting employees from using nonsecured internet connections; and for policy & entities subject to Health Insurance Portability and Accountability. *Last Action:* 09-21-20 S Set on the Senate Calendar
- [SB 1226](#): Allocates \$130 million in federal CARES Act funding: \$35 million to Pennsylvania's community colleges, \$25 million each to Temple University, the University of Pittsburgh, and Penn State University, \$10 million to Lincoln University, and \$10 million to Thaddeus Stevens College of Technology.

The State System previously received an allocation of \$30 million in federal CARES Act funding, which was [distributed](#) based on fall 2019 headcount of credit-bearing and clock hour students, as required by statute. West Chester University received as much as \$5.5 million while Cheyney University received less than \$200,000. [Contact your Senator](#) and **inquire about the proposed allocation under SB 1226 and if a more equitable distribution of CARES Act funding among institutions of higher education is possible.**

Also potentially before the Senate are the State System's property disposition resolutions, requesting authority to dispose of the State System's real estate at 2986 North Second Street, Harrisburg, PA 17110, also known as the Dixon University Center, as well as Porreco College of Edinboro University.

Final action on this request must occur within 30 calendar days following its date of transmittal (August 14th) to the General Assembly, excluding days on which either house is not in session because of an adjournment of more than 10 days to a day certain.

Senate Appropriations meets off the floor today and will consider:

- [SB 1241](#) (Argall): Amends the Administrative Code, in powers and duties of the Department of General Services and its departmental administrative and advisory boards and commissions, providing for report of State facilities owned or leased. Requires the Department of General Services to conduct an annual survey of state facility usage

Senate Education meets Tuesday to consider a variety of bills, including:

- [SB 1252](#) (Dinniman): Amends the Public School Code, in intermediate units, establishing the Retired Volunteer Educator Tutor Program for individualized tutoring sessions by retired volunteer educators for students of a school district during a mandated school closure under a disaster emergency to assist students attending the school district with limited technology resources in their homes and students attending the school district who are identified by the school district as having difficulty with online or distance learning.
- [SB 1268](#) (Ward, J.): Amends the Nurse Aide Resident Abuse Prevention Training Act providing that the state-approved training program for nurse aides should take into account training and experience acquired during the COVID-19 pandemic to transition nurse aides into placement on the Pennsylvania nurse aide registry. Provides standards for the Department of State to deem that an individual satisfied the requirement for completing nurse aide training for certification of COVID-19 temporary nurse aides.

Senate Health and Human Services also meets Tuesday at 11 a.m.:

- [HB 2503](#) (Miller, B): Amends Title 23 (Domestic Relations), in child protective services, to allow an employer to provisionally hire an applicant who has not yet received all the required background checks under limited conditions.

House of Representatives

Session & Committee Activity

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

The House stands adjourned until Tuesday, September 29, 2020 at 1:00 p.m., unless sooner recalled by the Speaker.

The chamber focused last week on some education matters, amending [SB 1216](#), which includes teacher certification flexibility and other provisions, and voted to protect religious freedoms. In other action, the House voted unanimously to enable the System to sell its real estate, i.e., the Dixon University Center and Porreco College of Edinboro University. [Read more >>](#)

This week, the House Democratic Policy Committee and House Commerce Committee hold hearings

realted to the imacts of COVID; the policy committee will also discuss voting issues and legal aid for tenants facing eviction.

Bill Tracking Report

The following information is updated during legislative session weeks.

In the Senate:

[SB 1325](#) (Bartolotta): An Act amending the act of March 10, 1949 (P.L.30, No.14), known as the Public School Code of 1949, in certification of teachers, repealing certificates issued by other states and providing for out of state applicants for certifications. *Last Action:* 9-18-20 S Referred to Senate Education

In the House:

[HB 1887](#) (Driscoll): Amends an act relating to the indemnification agreements between architects, engineers, and owners, contractors, subcontractors or suppliers, further providing for the act, providing for further indemnification. *Last Action:* 9-17-20 H Reported as amended House Commerce

[HB 2882](#) (Isaacson): Provides an additional 30 days of paid leave for any employee, faculty member, or staff member of a Pennsylvania college or university who is required to quarantine due to COVID-19. *Last Action:* 9-09-20 H Filed

[SB 835](#) (Langerholc): An Act providing for funding of high-speed broadband service infrastructure deployment in unserved areas of this Commonwealth and for powers and duties of the Department of Community and Economic Development. *Last Action:* 9-14-20 H Received in the House and referred to House Consumer Affairs

[SB 1216](#) (Langerholc): Amends Public School Code, in certification of teachers, for instructional certificate grade spans and age levels and duties of dept. and for special provisions applicable to 2020-2021 school year. *Last Action:* 9-17-20 H Reported from House Appropriations

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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