

Chester County Legislative Council

Legislative Update

December 2017

Constitutional Amendment

1. **Homestead Property Tax Exclusion – Constitutional Amendment Approved by the electorate in November 2017 General Election**
 1. **Homestead Tax Exemption: [HB 1285](#); Final passage 7/17/17.** The bill amends the PA Constitution to permit taxing jurisdictions to exempt from taxation up to 100% of the assessed value of a homestead property.
 2. *Shall the Pennsylvania Constitution be amended to permit the General Assembly to enact legislation authorizing local taxing authorities to exclude taxation up to 100 percent of the assessed value of each homestead property within a local taxing jurisdiction, rather than limit the exclusion to one-half of the median assessed value of all homestead property, which is the existing law?*
 3. This does not allow or authorize local taxing authorities to exclude up to 100% of assessed valued from real estate taxation. Local taxing authorities cannot take such action unless and until the General Assembly passes a law authorizing them to do so. The ballot question authorizes the General Assembly to pass such a law.

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 121: Keystone Exam Delay**
 - Delays implementation of Keystone exams as a graduation requirement and as a benchmark for participation in a project-based assessment until the 2019-20 school year.

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 328: School Board Training**

- Requires school board members and charter school trustees to receive 4 hours of training upon election and 2 hours of training upon reelection. The training will cover instruction and academic programs, personnel, fiscal management, operations, governance and ethics.
- PDE will provide the training free of charge and can approve alternative training programs provided by others, including school districts. PDE must consult with PSBA and PASBO as it develops the training.

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Sections 1124 and 1125.1: Economic Furloughs**
 - Allows school entities to furlough professional employees for economic reasons. School districts must also furlough an equal percentage of administrative staff
 - A school board may suspend professional employees if the district adopted a resolution at least 60 days prior to adoption of a final budget that states the reasons the furloughs are necessary.
 - Professional employees to be furloughed will be furloughed based on their most recent 2 years of evaluations in their area of certification in which they currently teach. Employees are reinstated in reverse order of furloughing and based on seniority.

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 1073: Superintendent Contract**-Changes the date of the required board action on a superintendent or assistant superintendent's contract from 150 days prior to expiration of the contract to 90 days prior to expiration of the contract. Extends an existing contract by one year for failure to take action, but limits extension of a contract under this section to one time.

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 732.1: PlanCon Moratorium Extension**-Prohibits PDE from accepting or approving new PlanCon applications for new projects through the 2017-18 fiscal year (NOTE: the effective date of this section of the bill makes this provision retroactive to July 1, 2017).

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 1547: Alcohol, Chemical and Tobacco Abuse Program**-Requires schools to include information about opioid and prescription drug abuse and prevention in their drug abuse programming education for students in grades 6-12, beginning with the 2018-19 school year. PDE and the Department of Health will develop a model curriculum for schools and shall develop in service training on the instruction requirements and curriculum for those with teaching relevant teaching responsibilities.

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 1006: Superintendent Reporting**-Removes language that requires superintendents to furnish PDE with reports on or before the first Monday of August each year that include suggested improvements or changes to the public school system. Maintains language requiring submission of reports at PDE's request.

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 1131: Appeals to PDE**-Reduces the time for filing with the Secretary an appeal by a professional employee who considers him or herself aggrieved by an action of the school board from 30 days from receipt of the written notice of the decision of the board to 15 days from receipt of the written notice of the decision of the board.

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 1517: School Security Drills**-Permits public schools to replace one of their fire drills each year with a school security drill, completed in coordination with local law enforcement and local emergency management associations and with prior parent notification. A school security drill is a drill designed to practice procedures to respond to an emergency situation that may include, but is not limited to, an act of terrorism, armed intruder situation or other violent threat.

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 1549.1: Agricultural Education**-Creates a Commission for Agricultural Education Excellence to assist in developing a plan for agricultural education and coordinate the implementation of agricultural education programming with the Department of Agriculture and PDE (NOTE: This section takes effect in 60 days).

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 1337: Prohibition on Lunch Shaming**-Requires school boards to establish a requirement that a school food program meal is provided to every student who requests one regardless of whether he/she can pay or owes money.
- When a student owes money for five or more school meals, a school board shall require schools under its jurisdiction to make at least 2 attempts to reach the student's parent to have them apply for participation in the free/reduced lunch program and may offer assistance in helping them apply.
- School boards must require schools to direct all communications regarding money owed by a student to the student's parent/guardian and not to the student.
- Finally, school boards must prohibit schools under their jurisdiction from publically identifying or stigmatizing a student who cannot pay or who owes money for school meals (NOTE: this new provision takes effect in 30 days).

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Section 1729.2-A: Multiple Charter Organizations**—Allows two or more charter schools to apply to form multiple charter organizations. PDE will develop a standard application, and an MCO can only be formed if both PDE and the authorizing school districts for each individual charter school involved approve of the consolidation. If approved, it allows multiple charter schools to operate under one administrator and one board, participate in the assessment system in the same way that a school district can and allow students to matriculate from one school to another to create a k-12 program. Local authorizing school districts maintain responsibility for renewal and termination decisions for each individual charter under the MCO.
- To be eligible to consolidate, within either of most recent two years, the charter schools proposing to consolidate must:
 - Meet the academic standards for student performance and assessment
 - Meet the accepted standards of fiscal management and audit requirements; and
 - Have an SPP score that is among the 25 percentile of all charter schools
 - If one school does not meet these criteria, it may only consolidate with a charter school that has met all criteria for the most recent two years.

Act 55 of 2017 – Key Components

- **Sections 2501 and 2502.53: Basic Education Funding**-Makes technical changes to the calculation of the basic education funding formula (NOTE: these changes are retroactive to July 1, 2017):
- Codifies the fix to lock data elements in place, fixing the data as of June 1 of the preceding school year. Allows modification of data elements only when an error or inaccuracy exists.
- Modifies the definition of “current expenditures” in the formula to exclude revenue received for tuition from patrons. This impacts the calculation of the local effort index to more accurately reflect a school district’s local effort, instead of artificially inflating expenditures without the corresponding ADMs.
- Includes Philadelphia’s sales and use tax and cigarette tax in the definition of “local tax-related revenue” beginning in 2017-18.
- Clarifies that for the fiscal year that began on July 1, 2017, a school district’s market value cannot exceed \$47 billion, and in each subsequent year, the maximum market value will increase by the percentage increase in market value for all school districts.

Recent Legislation

1. In the Senate: The Senate took action on the following bills:

1. **Senate Bill 540 - Excused Absences**: (Sen. Mensch, R-Montgomery), which provides for excused absences from school for a student who participates in a military funeral. (Passed 48/0); referred to House Education.
- **Senate Bill 723 – Civics**: (Sen. Rafferty, R-Montgomery), which requires, beginning in 2020-21, school districts to offer content related to the civics portion naturalization test at least once during grades 7 through 12 and to administer the civics portion of naturalization test to students. First and second consideration; referred to Senate Appropriations 11/14/17.

2. This Week's PA House Floor Calendar

- **House Bill 1401 – Shale Tax**: Amends the Tax Reform Code adding a new article providing for a volumetric severance tax imposing a 3.2 percent severance tax on unconventional natural gas extraction in addition to the existing impact fee. The addition of sections 1103-E and 1106-E of the act shall take effect July 1, 2017, or immediately, whichever is later. The remainder of this act shall take effect January 1, 2018, or immediately, whichever is later.
- **House Bill 110 - Budget Spending**: (Rep. Warner, R-Fayette), which amends the PA Constitution to limit state budget spending to prior year levels plus an inflation adjustment. The bill provides a mechanism to exceed that amount for items such as pension costs. First and second consideration; referred to House Appropriations 12/14/17.
- **House Bill 1460 - Pension**: (Rep. Miller, R-Lancaster), which requires PSERS and SERS to include the fees paid to investment managers, along with investment performance over a series of years in their annual financial statements. First and second consideration; referred to House Appropriations 11/21/17.
- **Senate Bill 166 - Political Contributions**: (Sen. Eichelberger, R-Blair), establishes the Protection of Employee Wages Act, prohibits public employers, including school districts, from making deductions for political contributions from the wages of public employees. Passed the Senate 2/8/17; First and second consideration in the House 12/5/17.

Property Tax Legislation

- 2. The Property Tax Independence Act: SB 76** - Provides for tax levies and information related to taxes; authorizes the imposition of a personal income tax or an earned income tax by a school district subject to voter approval; provides for imposition of and exclusions from a sales and use tax for the stabilization of education funding, for increase to the personal income tax, for certain licenses, for hotel occupancy tax, for procedure and administration of the tax, for expiration of authority to issue certain debt and for reporting by local government units of debt outstanding; establishes the Education Stabilization Fund; provides for disbursements from the Education Stabilization Fund and for senior citizen property tax rent rebate assistance; and makes repeals. The bill authorizes school districts to levy, assess and collect a tax on personal income or a tax on earned income and net profits as a means of abolishing property taxation by the school district.

The tax shall be the Sales and Use Tax for the Stabilization of Education Funding and shall be a replacement for the sales and use tax authorized under Article II of the Tax Reform Code and that is repealed by the act. The bill also provides senior citizens with assistance in the form of property tax and rent rebates. Chapter 3 and section 1505(b)(2) shall take effect June 30, 2018. Chapter 4 shall take effect January 1, 2018. The remainder of the act shall take effect immediately. Referred to Senate Finance (6/17/17).

- 3. Reverse Assessments: HB 1213** - Prohibits a taxing district from appealing an assessment based on the purchase or sale of a property, the financing or refinancing the property or following certain investments or improvements to the property. The bill now goes to the full House for consideration. Reverted to prior printer number on 5/23/17; set on House calendar, 9/13/17.

Property Tax Legislation (Continued)

3. **Reverse Assessments: SB 586** - The bill amends Title 53 (Municipalities General) by eliminating spot appeals of property assessments in Pennsylvania. Referred to Senate Appropriations. 6/5/17.
4. **Senior Property Tax Freeze: HB 641** - Allows municipalities (including school districts) to establish optional senior property tax freeze programs for residents ages 62 or older with an income of less than \$60,000 annually that have lived in PA for more than 5 years. First consideration, 5/17/17; Set on house calendar, 10/3/17.
5. **Senior Citizens Property Tax Freeze: SB 356** – The Senior Citizens Property Tax Freeze Act provides definitions and sets the age for eligibility at 65 or older. Any person who meets the age requirements shall be eligible for a property tax freeze and shall not be liable for paying any increases in taxes. Application procedure for the tax freeze is provided and the freeze shall continue until the property is transferred, upon which time the property tax rate shall be made current. The increase upon transfer applies unless the property is transferred to a surviving spouse within six months of death and so long as the surviving spouse is at least 62 years of age. The Department of Revenue shall reimburse local authorities for the tax difference. No action.
6. **Property Tax: SB 406** - Amends the Public School Code to requires a 2/3 school board vote on any tax increase. Current[y, Section 508 of the Public School Code of 1949 provides that a majority vote is required to take action on "Levying and assessing taxes." Section 603 provides that there may be only one such levy per year. First consideration 3/29/17; set on Senate calendar 6/5/17; Laid on the table 7/18/17.

Keystone Exams/Graduation Requirements

Charter School Legislation

1. **Charter School Bill: HB 97** - extensively revises and adds charter school provisions contained in the Public School Code of 1949 (School Code), including:

- Changes the cyber charter tuition calculation to save school districts approximately \$27 million,
- Implements transparency and accountability provisions for charter school administrators/trustees,
- Permits charter schools to form multiple charter organizations with school district/PDE approval,
- Expands the Charter Appeal Board
- Institutes caps on unassigned fund balances for charter schools,
- Requires the development of academic performance matrix for renewal/revocation decisions,
- Extends the term of the renewal of a charter from 5 to 10 years
- Requires an annual independent audit process for charter schools.
- Creates a separate evaluation system for charter school teachers and principals
- Creates a Performance Matrix that exclusively compares charter school entities to one another.

Positives and Negatives: The bill has some positive features that are of value, including the review of charter school funding and some potential savings of charter school tuition calculations. However, several concerns remain, such as the professional evaluation system for charter school employees, a separate charter school performance evaluation system, and the potential makeup of the Charter Appeal Board.

Passed the House, 108/84 on 4/25/17; Passed Senate as amended 7/9/17; Received as amended in House and referred House Rules, 7/10/17.

2. **Charter School Fund Balances: HB 351** – Amends the Public School Code, in school finances, further providing for limitations on certain unreserved fund balances by adding that a charter or cyber charter school entity may not receive payment from a school district entity unless it has adopted a budget that includes an estimated unreserved, undesignated fund balance of less than five percent of the total budgeted expenditures. Referred to House Education Committee 2/3/17. No action taken.

Human Resources Legislation

1. **Advance Notice of Superintendent Hiring and Terms: [SB 592](#)** - The bill requires offers of employment made to a prospective superintendent, assistant superintendent, associate superintendent and principal to be posted on the school district's website for two weeks before the board takes official action.

The bill also provides the same for offers of employment made to prospective executive directors or assistant executive directors of an intermediate unit. The posting would need to include the details of the final offer, including salary and the length of the employment contract. First consideration and second consideration; Passed the Senate 6/21/17. May be in the school code bill.

2. **Mandated Leave: [SB 229](#)** - approved by the Senate Education Committee. The bill removes several provisions from the School Code, including the provision requiring a minimum of 10 days of sick leave, the requirement to provide up to 25 days of accumulated sick leave (with the exception of when schools consolidate) to employees switching employers, the requirement to provide bereavement leave, the requirement to provide alternative payment plans and the requirement to provide sabbatical leave. First Consideration; Set on the Senate Calendar, 3/29/17.

3. **Employee Gun Possession in Schools: [SB 383](#)** -The bill permits school boards to adopt policies allowing school personnel to have access to firearms on the grounds of a public school. This legislation will not mandate a school's participation, but will give school boards the ability to establish policy and put in place protocols needed that permit personnel to access a firearm on designated school property. First consideration, 4/19/17; Laid on the table and removed from the table, 6/5/17; placed on the legislative calendar for 6/6/17. Passed the Senate, 6/28/17; referred to House Education.

Human Resources Legislation (continued)

4. **Paycheck Protection: [SB 167](#)** - Seeks to amend the PA Constitution by prohibiting school districts from using their payroll systems to collect membership dues, non-membership fees and political contributions from public employee paychecks. First and second consideration; laid on the table, 4/19/17.
5. **Union Leave: [SB 494](#)** - Amends the Public School Code to address the accrual of benefits by public employees on leave from a school district to work for outside organizations. First consideration, 3/29/17; set on the Senate calendar 4/24/17. Laid on the table, 7/18/17.
6. **Penalties for Child Abuse: [SB 363](#)** - Amends the Public School Code, in preliminary provisions, providing that the school entities and employees may not assist an employee, contractor or agent of a school entity to obtain new employment if the individual or entity knows or has a reasonable belief that the employee, contractor or agent engaged in abuse or sexual misconduct regarding a minor or student in violation of law. This does not relieve any legal responsibility to report suspected incidents of abuse. First consideration, 3/29/17; set on the Senate calendar 4/24/17. Laid on the table, 5/23/17.

Human Resources Legislation (continued)

8. **Drug Testing: HB 350** - Amends the Public School Code, in preliminary provisions, requiring testing for controlled substances for prospective employees at all public and private schools, intermediate units and area vocational-technical schools, including independent contractors and their employees, which exceptions for those who have no contact with children or are already subject to testing. Referred to committee on House Education, 2/3/17. Effective in 60 days.
9. **Retired Teachers: HB 361** – Amends Title 24 (Education), in membership, contributions and benefits, further providing for termination of annuities by allowing retired teachers to return to the classroom to serve as day-to-day or long term substitutes for up to 90 days without interruption of their PSERS retirement benefit. Referred to committee on House Education, 2/7/17. Effective in 60 days.
10. **Epi-Pen Administration – Act 2 of 2017: HB 224** – Act 2 of 2017 Amends the Public School Code, in school health services, authorizing school bus drivers to administer epinephrine auto-injectors, provided the driver adheres to established policies and has successfully completed a training program that shall be developed and implemented by the Department of Health. Effective in 60 days. - Passed the House, 186/1, 3/13/17; passed the Senate, 47/0. Signed by Governor, Act 2 of 2017.
11. **Health Benefits: SB 420** - Amends Title 24 (Education), establishing the Public School Employees' Benefit Board and providing for its powers and duties; requiring a school employee health benefits evaluation; providing for a health benefits program for public school employees; and establishing the Public School Employees' Benefit Trust Fund. The intent is to consolidate school district health care. Referred to committee on Senate Education, 2/28/17. Effective immediately.

School Finances

- 1. School District Fund Balances: SB 412** - Amends the Public School Code, in school finances, requiring, thirty days prior to the final passage of a budget for the school district, prominently post on the school district's website the amount of unencumbered funds remaining from the school district's current year's and prior year's general fund. Referred to Senate Education, 2/28/17.
- 2. Response to Audit: HB 453 – Became vehicle for House Revenue Bill** The bill requires public agencies being audited by the state Auditor General to respond to the release of an audit within 120 days or face withholding of appropriations. The bill codifies a formal process. Passed the House, 192/0; First consideration in Senate 6/5/17. Passed by House as amended 103/91; Sent to Senate. Senate non-concurred in House Amendments (N7/Y43), 9/20/17.
- 3. Tax Collection Fraud Prevention: HB 16** - The bill amends the Local Tax Collection Law to require a tax collector's account to include title, the name of the municipality and to require tax notices to include the name of the account to which taxes must be paid. Passed the House, 191/0, 4/5/17. First and second consideration in Senate; Referred to Senate Appropriations, 5/9/17. Laid on the table 6/30/17.
- 4. EITC Funding: HB 250** – Increases the total aggregate amount of all tax credits approved for contributions from business firms to scholarship organizations, educational improvement organizations and pre-kindergarten scholarship organizations from \$125 million to \$175 million in a fiscal year. First & Second Consideration in the House. Passed the House, 147/39, 3/13/17. Referred to Senate Education 3/20/17.

School Finances (continued)

5. **Emergency Basic Education Subsidy: [HB 648](#)** - Amends the Public School Code, establishing the Emergency Basic Education Subsidy Fund providing for the payment of the basic education subsidy to school districts when a General Appropriation Act providing for a basic education subsidy appropriation is not enacted by August 15 of any fiscal year. Effective immediately. Referred to House Education, 2/28/17.

6. **Approval of Regulations: [SB 561](#); amended on the floor and referred back to Senate Appropriations.** The bill requires the General Assembly and the Governor to approve all regulations with an economic impact or cost to the Commonwealth, to its political subdivisions, and to the private sector exceeding \$1 million. Under the current regulatory review process, the General Assembly must pass a concurrent resolution disapproving a regulation and the Governor must sign it to bar the governor's own agency from enacting the regulation. Passed the Senate 6/13/17; referred to House State Government.

7. **Property Tax Abatement: [HB 758](#); approved by the Senate Urban Affairs & House Committee.** The bill creates a program for tax abatement for deteriorated properties in certain areas of the commonwealth for a period of ten years during which the properties must be updated, improved and developed into mixed-use properties. Passed the House, 4/4/17; Laid on Table 6/27/17.

School Safety, Facilities, Transportation

- 1. School Security: HB 178** - Amends the Public School Code, in terms and courses of study, requiring school entities to conduct one school security drill within 90 days of commencement of the year each school year in each school building. Effective in 60 days. Passed the House, 187/0, 3/13/17; Passed the Senate, 34/16, 7/27/17; Received as amended in House and referred to House Rules, 9/8/17.
- 2. Use of School Facilities: HB 397** - The bill requires school districts to provide their facilities to the Game Commission for hunter education courses that occur after school hours, on weekends or any other time school is not in session and requiring the Game Commission to reimburse the district for actual costs incurred. The bill was considered but not given final approval last session. A version of this bill has been introduced in several legislative sessions. It does provide for school districts flexibility in determining when to hold these courses, and does provide reimbursement for school use. Passed the House, 169/22, 4/5/17. Referred to Senate Game and Fisheries.
- 3. Transportation: HB 349** - Amends the Public School Code, in pupils and attendance, further providing for when transportation provided by adding that the board of school directors in every school district shall award all contracts for the transportation of pupils by utilizing a request for proposals process. The contracts shall be for a period of not more than two years, and may be extended for a period of not more than one year by mutual agreement of the parties. Effective in 60 days. Referred to House Education 2/3/17.

Keystone Exams/Graduation Requirements

1. **Graduation Requirements: HB 202 – Act 6 of 2017**

Amends the Public School Code, in preliminary provisions, further providing for Keystone Exams adding that in any school year in which a demonstration of proficiency on a Keystone Exam is required for high school graduation, a CTE Concentrator shall be deemed proficient provided that the CTE Concentrator shall meet all of the outlined requirements. Effective immediately. Passed the House, 187/0, 4/18/17; Passed the Senate, 49/0, 6/6/17.

2. **Keystone Exams: SB 660** - Amends the Public School Code, in preliminary provisions, further providing for Keystone Exams adding that in any school year in which a demonstration of proficiency on a Keystone Exam is required for high school graduation, a CTE Concentrator shall be deemed proficient provided that the CTE Concentrator: (1) completes locally established grade-based requirements for academic content areas associated with each Keystone Exam, and (2) either attains an industry-based competency certification. Further, in any school year in which a demonstration of proficiency on a Keystone Exam is required for high school graduation, a student shall be deemed proficient if the student demonstrates competency in standards-based subject matter content through course grades or assessments and through three or more rigorous and compelling pieces of evidence that reflect the student's readiness for meaningful postsecondary engagement consistent with the student's goals and career plans. Effective immediately. Referred to Senate Education on 5/2/17.

3. **Keystone Exams: SB 756** - The stated intent of the bill is to eliminate the Keystone Exams; provide that the SAT, vocational, GED, or ASVB tests can be used to fulfill the federal accountability required under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA); no test can take more than two days of instructional time and must be scored and returned within 30 days; that accountability results shall be used as part of a comprehensive plan for a multi-faceted, holistic, and rigorous approach to determine teacher evaluation and school performance including classroom observation, parental and principal input; and the bill guarantees the right of parents to be notified of their right to opt their children out of any accountability test. Effective immediately. Laid on the table 7/10/17.

4. **Graduation Requirements: HB 564** - Amends the Public School Code adding a new section providing for graduation requirements by adding that in order to graduate from high school, a pupil must correctly answer sixty percent of the questions listed on a test that is identical to the civics portion of the naturalization test used by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services. Allows each school entity to administer the test in any grade from grades seven through twelve. Referred to House Education Committee.

Pupil Services/Curriculum/Professional Development

- 1. AP Scores and College Credit: [HB 1022 \(companion bill SB 725\)](#)** - The bill requires Pennsylvania institutions of higher education to provide uniformity in credit available to incoming freshmen who have scored at least a 3 on an AP exam or have passed another relevant exam. Passed the House, 190/0, 4/26/17; Referred to Senate Education.
- 2. Licensing Online Schools: [HB 857](#)** - passed by the House, 190-4. The bill amends the Private Academic Schools Act to allow online schools to become licensed by the State Board of Private Academic Schools. Received in Senate Education 5/31/17.
- 3. Military Recruiter Access: [HB 524](#)**; passed by the House, 176-18. The bill requires school entities to provide armed forces recruiters with access to lists of secondary school students (current law says “seniors”) upon request. The bill also requires school entities to notify their 10th, 11th and 12th grade students of this requirement and provides for a student opt-out process. Referred to Senate Education, 5/31/17.
- 4. Clearinghouse of Online Courses: [HB 679](#)**; passed by the House, 123-71. The bill creates a clearinghouse of online courses for students in grades 6-12 developed and maintained by PDE. By 2018-19 a database of online courses that contain Keystone Exam-related content must be developed. By 2019-20, a broader database of online courses offered by other providers (which can include other school entities) will be developed. Referred to Senate Education, 5/31/17.
- 5. Educator Training in Transition Services: [HB 1305](#)**; passed by the House, 194-0. The bill requires professional educators in school entities that provide secondary transition services to students in grades 8 to 12 (or to those who are ages 14 or older) to complete training to be developed by PDE beginning in 2018-19. Referred to Senate Education, 5/31/17.

Pupil Services/Curriculum/Professional Development

- 1. Censorship of Historical Documents: SB 88** - The bill prohibits content-based censorship on historical U.S. or Pennsylvania documents and ensures that no teacher or administrator is prohibited from using, reading from or posting in a public school excerpts from historical documents, including the U.S. Constitution, the Mayflower Compact, the national anthem and the Declaration of Independence, during the course of educational instruction. First consideration, 4/19/17; laid on table, 6/5/17.
- 2. Homeschoolers and Vo-Tech Access: SB 93** - The bill permits students who are homeschooled to access additional programs, such as vocational or technical education programs, established by a school district. First consideration, 4/19/17; laid on table 4/24/17.
- 3. Kindergarten Requirements: SB 295** - Amends the Public School Code, in duties and powers of boards of school directors, further providing for additional schools and departments and for kindergartens; and, in terms and courses of study, further providing for dates and times of school terms and sessions and commencement. The bill requires school districts to provide at least five hours of kindergarten each day for children ages four to six. Referred to Senate Education Committee, 2/6/17. Effective immediately.
- 6. Legislative Approval of State ESSA Plan: SB 725; approved by the Senate Education Committee.** The bill requires the House and Senate Education Committees to sign off on the ESSA state plan prior to submission to the U.S. Department of Education and requires the General Assembly to approve the plan or appropriate state funds for the plan prior to implementation of the plan. Referred to Senate Appropriations, 6/5/17. **Placed in School Code.**

Pension Reform – SB1 – Act 5 of 2017

1. Passed the Senate, 40/9; voted favorably from House Government Committee; Goes to full now on Thursday, June 8. Governor has indicated he will sign.
2. Effective July 1, 2019 for PSERS and January 1, 2019 for SERS
3. Option 1: A side-by-side DB/DC hybrid with a 1.25% multiplier for the DB component (this is the default plan if no election is made by the employee) School employees become members of a new Class T-G.
4. Option 2: A side-by-side DB/DC hybrid with a 1% multiplier for the DB component. School employees become members of a new Class T-H.
5. Option 3: A DC-only option
6. Shared risk and shared gain provides future savings
7. Other provisions
 - The age for full retirement (superannuation) is raised from 65 to 67 with at least 3 years of service, or the "rule of 97" calculated by adding the member's age and years of service. Reduced benefits are provided for early retirement.
 - The "footprint rule" that was utilized in Act 120 of 2010 remains for pre-hybrid workers who leave and return. Therefore, members who have pre-hybrid tier membership who leave and return to service will be re-enrolled in the class of service to which they belonged prior to the new design plan.
 - A revenue-neutral Option 4 lump sum withdrawal option for Act 120 members is created.
 - A commission will be established to study and make recommendations to the General Assembly and the Governor regarding investment strategies and ways to reduce expenditures to generate savings.