

January 29, 2021

Legislative Recap

A Look Back at Week 3

This week, both the House and Senate returned to regular operations following a one week pause. And while there was a great deal of action on the floor of the House and Senate, the vast majority of the conversation focused on non-education related topics.

However, there was one notable and important exception in the House. *On Thursday, the House held 2nd reading and voted to pass H. 3609*, which will unfreeze salary steps and retroactively award step increases for the 2020-2021 school year to all eligible educators under the state salary schedule. The passage of H. 3609 did involve one moment of significant debate as Rep. Jonathon Hill (Anderson County) attempted to attach an amendment that would only allow funding for step increases to districts currently offering full five day, face-to-face instructional options. Several Representatives spoke out strongly against the proposed amendment, including Rep. Magnuson, Rep. Allison, Rep. Hiott, and Rep. Clyburn. After a brief period of floor debate, the House voted to table (kill) Rep. Hill's amendment by a vote of 113-3 (voting in favor of the amendment- Rep. Hill, Rep. May, and Rep. Dabney). After the completion of the required 3rd reading of the bill on Tuesday, it will head to the Senate for action.

In addition, the full House passed H. 3608, which provides \$9 million in one-time funds to the state's public charter schools to offset funding shortfalls experienced this year due to increased student enrollment for the 2020-21 school year. The House also passed H. 3612, the SC Computer Science Education Initiative Act, by a vote of 116-1 (only Rep. Hill voted against the bill). Both pieces of legislation will now head to the Senate.

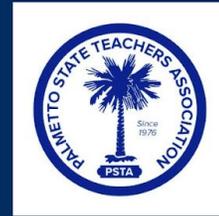
There were also several education-related actions in House committees. The House K-12 Education Subcommittee and the full Education and Public Works Committee passed three pieces of legislation: [H. 3612](#) (SC Computer Science Education Initiative Act), [H. 3613](#) (comprehensive literacy legislation), and [H. 3589](#) (allowing for creation of "Schools of Innovation" by local school districts). Before passing H. 3613, the subcommittee and committee did adopt several amendments recommended by PSTA, most notably:

- A requirement that the "Reading Panel" created in Section 2 must include three current classroom teachers with direction instructional responsibilities with students, with one teacher each from elementary, middle, and high school settings.
- A provision that "local school districts, working in collaboration with the department (of education), shall offer (*Read to Succeed*) courses at no cost to educators."

As noted, the full house already passed H. 3612, and the House is likely to discuss H. 3613 and H. 3589 next week

The only education-related action in the Senate this week was passage by the Senate Education Committee of [S. 201](#), which addresses the powers of the state superintendent of education when declaring an "educational state of emergency" in a school or district. The bill will now move to the full Senate for review and debate. The Senate Education Committee had been scheduled to discuss S. 16 and S. 38, but those meetings were cancelled.

Legislative Preview A Look at the Week Ahead



In the coming week, the following bills could receive 2nd reading and a vote by the full House or Senate:

- **House-** H. 3613 and H. 3589
- **Senate-** S. 201

In addition, H. 3608 (charter school funding) has already been referred to the Senate Finance Committee and could receive committee review soon.

At this time, the House EPW Committee has not scheduled any hearings or meetings for the week ahead, but PSTA will alert members if a committee hearing on a key piece of legislation is added. While the schedule is likely to be updated, currently, the Senate Education Committee is scheduled to review the following bills:

- **S. 38** (Wednesday at 9 AM)- this bill is predominately focused on higher education. For K-12 education, it would add the Emancipation Proclamation to the existing list in state statute of foundational documents on constitutional principles that must be studied by students in high school (currently, the list includes the Constitution, the Declaration of Independence, and *The Federalist Papers*). **PSTA supports passage of this legislation as it relates to K-12 education.**
- **S. 16** (Thursday at 10 AM)- this bill would replace the requirement for high school students to pass a 1/2 credit course in Economics with a 1/2 credit course in Personal Finance in order to graduate. The bill would not prevent schools from offering Economics; it would shift the graduation requirement from Economics and Personal Finance. **PSTA supports strong personal finance education but believes this legislation is unnecessary due to the state's adoption of new standards in 2019 to shift the old Economics course to a course in "Economics and Personal Finance." These new standards directly address most of the topics of instruction referenced in S. 16.**

Membership Advocacy Suggestions for the Week Ahead



1. **Provide Feedback to PSTA-** Throughout the legislative session, PSTA staff will be providing testimony whenever possible for committee review of education-related legislation. In order to ensure that testimony is aligned to the experiences and concerns of our members, we have created a [feedback form for membership](#) to share their thoughts on upcoming legislation. PSTA staff would love to hear from you!
2. **Literacy Legislation-** The piece of literacy legislation (H. 3613) passed this week by the House Education and Public Works Committee is the most comprehensive legislation of its type in our state since the Read to Succeed Act. The legislation intersects with the work of all educators, but it has especially significant implications for teachers in grades K-3 and for reading coaches. If you work in one of these positions, please consider reviewing the legislation and sharing your feedback with your member of the House of Representatives. You can find your member by [entering your address at this website](#). Please note that this bill could be brought to the full House for second reading as early as the coming week.
3. **Thank Your Representative-** Please consider either calling or writing your representative in the House for their support of H. 3609. The final vote on the bill was 118-0. Of the six representatives that did not register a vote on the bill, the only one that supported Rep. Hill's attempted amendment (which PSTA opposed) was Rep. Hill. Taking the time now to say "thank you" to your representative for moving quickly to pass this legislation can be an effective step in building the positive relationships necessary to advocate on future education issues in the House. You can identify your representative in the House using the link in #2 above.