



Do you know that the political process affects virtually everything in your school day?

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Member Lobbyist!**

Questions?

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Senate Committee to Hold Testing Hearings

On Wednesday, January 28, 2015, the Senate Education Committee held its first hearing of the new session of the General Assembly. The committee heard testimony from Superintendent of Public Instruction Dr. Richard Ross about his recently completed report on recommendations to reduce the burdensome time currently devoted to standardized testing. Ross stated that the recommendations, if enacted, would reduce the time spent on testing by approximately 20%.

The report states that the Ohio Department of Education (ODE) will take a number of actions to address the testing issue. These actions include:

- Working with the federal government to advocate for flexibility in the testing system.
- Monitoring the first administrations of the new tests.
- Finding ways to use a single test for multiple purposes.
- Exploring whether new state tests can be used for gifted identification.

The report also made a number of legislative recommendations that require a change in law. These recommendations include:

- Limiting the amount of time a student takes state and district tests to two percent of the school year.
- Limiting the time spent practicing for tests to one percent of the school year.



- Eliminating the fall administration of the third grade reading test while providing an opportunity to take the test in the summer for students who need it.
- Making math and writing diagnostic tests in the first through third grades optional.
- Eliminating the use of student learning objectives (SLOs) as part of the teacher evaluation system.

The full report on testing and recommendations from ODE can be viewed [by clicking here](#).

At the conclusion of the hearing, Senator Peggy Lehner (R- Kettering), Chair of the Senate Education Committee, announced that she plans to hold several weeks of hearings on the issue of testing. Next week the Committee will hear from school district superintendents. Future hearings are planned for teachers, school board members and the general public.

House Republicans Introduce Charter School Accountability Legislation; Governor Also Unveils Charter Reform Proposals

House Bill 2 (R-Roegner/Dovilla) is a package of charter school reforms introduced by House Republicans this week. Separately, Governor Kasich has outlined a set of charter school reforms as part of his biennial state budget proposal. The Governor's plan includes penalties for charter sponsors with low ratings on Ohio's new sponsor rating system, but also would allow sponsors with the highest rating ("exemplary") to seek a property tax levy from voters to pay for operations. Charter school reform is also high on the agenda of Senate Education Committee Chair Peggy Lehner (R-Kettering).

The OEA welcomes the introduction of House Bill 2. The bill focusses on strengthening the laws on charter sponsors, which is certainly needed. But there is more work to be done to make sure that comprehensive charter school reform that benefits Ohio's students and taxpayers is achieved. One of the problems with the current system is that too much money is going to poor performing charters at the expense of kids in traditional public schools. The OEA looks forward to working closely with lawmakers to ensure meaningful accountability and transparency for Ohio's charter school system. The House Education Committee will hear testimony from the HB 2 sponsors on Wednesday, February 4, 2015. The new chair of the House Education Committee is Rep. Bill Hayes (R-Harrison Township).



House Bill 1 Seeks to Offer Grants to Encourage Ohio Students to Pursue In-Demand Occupations

Last week the Ohio House of Representatives introduced approximately 25 bills. The first one - House Bill 1 (R-Schuring) - seeks to establish the Ohio Workforce Grant Program. The intent of the program is to encourage students to pursue occupations that are in-demand. A list of these occupations can be found by [clicking here](#).

The program will provide up to \$5,000 to students on an annual basis. One-third of the grant will be distributed to the recipient at the beginning of the academic year. The remainder will be distributed in equal installments throughout the year upon successful completion of milestones adopted by the Chancellor. These milestones include spending between 30 and 90 days of training in a workplace of an in-demand field; the completion of counseling on how to manage student loan debt; and completion of curriculum. Students who graduate with a certificate or a degree as part of the program will be eligible for up to a 25 percent tax credit on their student loans. The bill appropriates \$100,000,000 over the Fiscal Year 2016-2017 biennium to fund the program.