

The second committee deadline passed at midnight on Thursday, March 29, which means there are just under two months to go before the constitutionally mandated adjournment date of Monday, May 21. The second committee deadline is for committees to act favorably on bills that met the first deadline in the other chamber. Committees have been meeting all hours of the day to hear as many bills as they can in advance of these committee deadlines, and now the legislature will go on a week-long break starting Friday, March 30, returning Monday, April 9. Interesting statistic, at this point of the legislative biennium 4,282 bills have been introduced in the House of Representatives, and 3,884 bills have been introduced in the Senate.

The third committee deadline, Friday, April 20, is the deadline for budget bills to be adopted and move through the committee process. So, expect quick action on the budget bills once the legislature returns Monday, April 9.

## **PENSION BILL PASSES SENATE**

On Monday, March 26 the Senate unanimously passed [SF2620](#), the Omnibus Pension Bill. The bill contains address funding shortfalls and makes statute changes to all four public pension systems including the Teachers Retirement Association. For TRA, the bill increases both employers and employees contribution increase as well as a retiree COLA reduction, and other benefit reforms. It also includes funding, through a pension adjustment mechanism, to cover the employer contribution increase. The House is expected to begin moving the companion bill after the legislative break.

## **TRANSPORTATION CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT**

This week legislation was introduced in the Senate to call for a constitutional amendment to ask the voters if they want to dedicate sales tax revenues generated from auto parts and repairs toward road construction, bridge repair and other transportation projects. [SF3837](#) passed through the Senate Transportation Finance and Policy committee on Wednesday, March 28, but the proposed constitutional amendment has not gained traction in the House and has yet to be introduced.

Critics of the proposed amendment say that the sales tax on auto parts and other items go directly to the general fund, which is used to fund many state agencies and public institutions, like schools. Opponents argue that if a constitutional amendment dedicates certain taxes to transportation projects, it would give transportation funding an advantage over other portions of the state budget. Education organizations each testified against the proposed amendment arguing this would limit resources available to public education, which is currently a constitutional obligation and significantly underfunded.

## **SCHOOL SAFETY PROPOSALS ADVANCE IN HOUSE**

On Thursday, House Republicans held a press conference outlining a \$50 million plan to fund school safety initiatives in school districts. The plan includes the bills we've already seen moving

forward including safe schools revenue, expansion of the allowable uses of long-term facilities maintenance revenue along with additional aid, increased funding for school-linked mental health grants, grants for school safety audits, suicide prevention training for educators, and the establishment of threat assessment teams. We expect to see more details once the House puts together their E12 supplemental budget bill shortly after the legislative break.

### **SENATE OMNIBUS EDUCATION POLICY BILL**

On Thursday, the Senate Education Policy Committee passed its [Omnibus Policy Bill](#) (see attached is a summary for more details). Significant provisions include a school rating system, school discipline policy changes, dyslexia screening and changes to when a teaching license could be suspended or revoked. Provisions related to early learning and ABE are also included, which are also the same proposals included in the MDE policy bill and the House omnibus policy bill.

- Adds language to allow children in protective services or experiencing homelessness to qualify for early learning scholarships without providing income verification
- Clarifies that children receiving a scholarship are required to receive developmental screening within 90 days of their third birthday
- Strikes an obsolete provision allowed early learning scholarship sites to participate the statewide scholarship program prior to becoming rated
- Clarifies that the state may select more than one high school equivalency test.
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### **COMMUNITY EDUCATION TESTIMONY THIS WEEK**

This week both the House E12 Education Finance Committee and the Senate E12 Education Finance Committees are scheduled heard [legislation](#) to require a portion of voluntary prekindergarten participants to be served through a mixed delivery of services if a district receives new revenue in FY20. Annette Sallman, Director of Stillwater Community Education, testified in the Senate and Wendy Webster, Director of Community Education in St. Anthony-New Brighton, testified in the House. While not opposed to encouraging more mixed delivery, the bill would have 40% of any new funds be used for mixed delivery. This would have provided little flexibility if a district did not have enough providers in the community to meet this threshold. In addition, both testifiers suggested that perhaps the legislature should wait until the OLA evaluation of early learning is released to see what recommendations that report provides. Sen. Nelson, the author of the Senate bill, also indicated her preference would be that no additional funding move forward until this report comes forward. The bills will be considered when the House and Senate put together their supplemental budget bill.