

# ***TIER CAPITOL UPDATE***

## ***Texas Institute for Education Reform***

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### **Only Three Weeks Left**

While the calendar says the 81<sup>st</sup> Legislative Session should be winding down, the action is starting to hit full speed. As deadlines approach, legislators are in a hurry to move their bills or amend them onto other bills that are farther along in the process.

From a practical standpoint, bills that have not been approved by committee are dead and bills that have committee approval need to pass the House of the Senate next week to have a decent chance of becoming law.

To help this happen, the House and Senate are spending much more time on the floor and less time in committee. While legislators will take a break this weekend, they will likely work the last three weekends of the session.

### **Summary of Key Legislation**

#### **Accountability**

HB 3 by Rep. Eissler, the omnibus accountability bill, was heard in the Senate Education Committee this past Thursday. As HB 3 is ahead of SB 3 procedurally, expect HB 3 to be the one that continues moving through the process.

At the hearing on SB 3, the committee indicated that it would substitute the language from the Senate version into HB 3. Given that the Senate already approved that language, this was not surprising. Expect that language to pass the Senate again. Once passed, the bill must go back to the House where the House can either concur with the Senate version or elect to ask for the appointment of a conference committee to work out the difference between the two bills.

In previous issues, we outlined the differences between the House and Senate versions. TIER will continue to support the language in SB 3—especially in regards to graduation standards, social promotion, and distinctions for districts and campuses.

SB 1363 by Senator Shapiro, which would allow the TEA to make needed clarifications to the public school curriculum has passed the Senate and will be

heard in the House Public Education Committee this week. TIER supports this bill

#### **Charter Schools**

SB 1830 was received by the House and referred to the House Public Education Committee. The bill will likely receive a hearing in the next week or so. This is the only major charter school bill that is moving.

TIER supports this legislation and will continue to encourage legislators to vote for SB 1830.

#### **Career and Technology Education (CTE)**

While several CTE bills were filed, most of them are not moving. Instead, CTE provisions have been added to other bills through amendments. SB 1313 by Senator Shapiro is the exception. This bill, which improves the quality and availability of CTE programs, has passed the Senate and will be heard in the House Public Education Committee on Tuesday, 5/12. Other CTE provisions, including the Jobs and Education for Texans (JET) grant program, are currently included in at least one version of the accountability bill.

#### **Prekindergarten**

HB 130 by Rep. Patrick, was approved by the House earlier today. This bill authorizes a grant program to pay for full-day prekindergarten programs. Many groups, including TIER, are concerned that this program is very expensive and lacks the necessary accountability to ensure that these programs are effective and worth the money. Rep. Eissler successfully added amendments to HB 130 to address accountability, and we are in the process of reviewing them. HB 130 now moves to the Senate for consideration.

#### **Teacher Incentive Pay**

The conference committee on the general appropriations bill approved funding for the existing teacher incentive pay grant programs. Funding for 2010-2011 will be \$395 million. That's an increase of 15% over the previous biennium's appropriation of \$342 million.

While that's great news, incentive pay continues to be under attack by the public school finance bill which is likely to be heard by the House next week (HB 3646 by Rep. Hochberg). Under current law, 60% of these funds are to be used to reward teachers based

on student performance. In the current budget cycle, that would amount to 60% of \$342 million or about \$205 million.

In the committee substitute for HB 3646, the amount dedicated to these criteria falls to 30%. Based on the new figures, the 2010-2011 budget would only allocate \$118.5 million--\$86.5 million less or a reduction of about 42%.

#### Talking Points on House Bill 3646

- HB 3646 related to public school funding and it is widely-supported. In the House Public Education Committee, Rep. Hochberg added a committee amendment that dramatically changes how these funds can be used.
- Under current law, 60% of grant funds must be used to reward teachers for improving student achievement. The remaining funds may be used for mentoring, gaining certification in the subject areas in which they teach, working in areas with teacher shortages, earning postgraduate degrees, improving student achievement, and implementing the Teacher Advancement Program.
- The committee amendment reduces the amount of grant funds used for rewarding teachers who improve student achievement to 30%. This will result in districts having to use more grant funds for programs without a proven history of raising student achievement and helping to retain the best teachers.
- **Ask legislators to support amendments to restore teacher incentive funding based on student achievement to current levels.**

#### Teacher Quality

HB 4152, which speeds the certification process for teachers who hold a teaching certificate from another state or country, passed the House last week. It now heads to the Senate. TIER supports this legislation.

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TIER welcomes your questions and comments. Please visit the “contact us” section of our website, [www.texaseducationreform.org](http://www.texaseducationreform.org) and let us know what you think.