



The ACCS Legislative Update

2017 Legislative Session Update #2017-06

March 17, 2017

Education Budget Begins to Move...

The Alabama Legislature had its first three-day legislative week this week, meeting on Tuesday, March 14; Wednesday, March 15; and Thursday, March 16, completing the 11th, 12th, and 13th legislative days of the 2017 Regular Legislative Session. With a two-week legislative spring break on the horizon, both the House of Representatives and the Senate worked long and late hours where both budgets and other controversial legislation were debated at length. On Tuesday, the House spent many hours debating the General Fund Budget and related budget bills which were ultimately passed and sent to the Senate for further consideration, and on Thursday, held a "Pro-Life Day" which focused on debating and passing multiple "pro-life" bills. In the Senate, the Finance and Taxation Education Committee on Wednesday held an over two-hour committee meeting debating and favorably reporting out the Education Budget and budget-related bills, and on Thursday, spent many hours debating these bills and a new version of the controversial prison construction bill, **SB302**, on the Senate floor. While SB302 was ultimately passed by the Senate, the Education Budget was carried over after several senators raised concerns about the amount of time given to study the changes in the budget before voting on it. The Education Budget is expected to be the first order of business in the Senate when the Legislature comes back from its spring break on April 4.

The current version of the Education Budget (the Senate F&TE Committee Substitute) level-funds most agencies and programs at their current budgeted amounts with small increases in certain K-12 programs and a \$15 million increase for the First Class Pre-K program. All of the four-year universities were level-funded across the board, and all programs under the Community College System were level-funded except for an increase of \$1.75 million for workforce development initiatives. **While the Education Budget will change further** as it goes through the legislative process, it is not expected to change much on the higher education side as available new dollars that can be appropriated have been consumed by the growth in the disabled veterans and dependents scholarship program under the Alabama Department of Veterans' Affairs.

As mentioned earlier, the Legislature is now on a two-week spring break and will not reconvene until Tuesday, April 4. There will not be an ACCS Legislative Update for the next two weeks due to the spring break recess.

Please make plans to attend ACCS Day on Thursday, April 6th from 10:00-2:00 on the Capitol and Archives and History Building lawns. This is a great opportunity to share all of the wonderful things happening at our community colleges!

Bills of Interest:

SB114/HB163 – Sen. Pittman/Rep. McMillan:

To establish the Community College System as a body corporate and give the Board of Trustees authority to manage the acquisition and disposition of property (*Both SB114 and HB163 are now in position to receive final passage from the Legislature*)

SB129 – Sen. Orr:

To make appropriations for the support, maintenance, and development of public education – **the Education Budget** (*Favorable Report from the Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee 3/15; likely first order of business in the Senate on 4/4*)

SB307 – Sen. Orr:

To make a supplemental appropriation from the Education Trust Fund Advancement and Technology Fund to the Department of Education, Alabama Community College System, and 4-year institutions of higher education (*Introduced this week and given Favorable Report by the Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee 3/15*)

SB315 – Sen. Dial:

To modify existing requirements of the disabled veterans and dependents scholarship program under the Alabama Department of Veterans' Affairs and to increase the education assistance provided by the state to eligible Alabama National Guard members (*Introduced this week and given Favorable Report by the Senate Finance and Taxation Education Committee 3/15*)

HB410 – Rep. Butler:

To clarify the allowance and prohibition of carrying firearms in certain places, including allowing concealed carry of pistols on campuses of institutions of higher education (*Introduced this week and assigned to the House Public Safety and Homeland Security Committee*)

HB432 – Rep. Patterson:

To authorize an employer and employee surcharge when a retiree of the Teachers' Retirement System or Employees' Retirement System performs duties for compensation, including independent contractors, without suspension of the retiree's retirement allowance (*Introduced this week and assigned to the House State Government Committee*)

