

Education Legislative Report

February 3, 2016 – Issue #4 – Special Bulletin

7

Proposal to Delay School District Annual Meetings Rejected in House and Senate

Actions in both the Senate and the House this week mean that it is unlikely that Governor Scott's call for level-funded school spending and delayed budget votes will be enacted by the General Assembly this year. Other proposals from the Governor's budget address have not yet been fully considered.

On Tuesday, the Senate Education Committee voted on a portion of S.46, a bill introduced to implement the portions of Governor Scott's proposals related to level-funded FY18 school spending. In a straw poll vote, the committee unanimously rejected moving school district budget votes to May 23. Prior to the vote, the committee took testimony from Secretary of Education Rebecca Holcombe. The committee also heard from members of the Secretary of State's office on the warning requirements for school district budgets and the confusion that could potentially be caused by a date change this late in the budgeting season. The committee's vote did not address the other provisions of S.46, which would require teachers to contribute a minimum of 20% toward employer-provided health insurance premiums. We expect the committee will consider provisions of the Governor's proposal that would affect FY19 and beyond.

On Friday, the House of Representatives voted against an amendment that would have delayed school district budget votes until May 23. When the amendment failed, the underlying bill, S.1, passed without any further amendments. As reported in previous *Education Legislative Reports*, S.1 is a fix for what would otherwise be artificially low pupil count of prekindergarten students, due to delays by some private prekindergarten providers conducting background checks.

Prior to the House debate on the amendment, Nicole Mace of the VSBA testified in the House Education Committee about the negative consequences of moving budget votes to May 23. In the debate on the amendment itself, some members who spoke in support of delaying school budget votes expressed their support for the Governor's overall education funding proposals.

Published By: Vermont School Boards Association, Vermont Superintendents Association, Vermont Principals' Association, Vermont Council of Special Education Administrators, Vermont Association of School Business Officials and Vermont School Boards Insurance Trust.

Attn: Emily Simmons, 2 Prospect St., Montpelier, VT 05602 (802)-223-3580

Other members expressed support for studying the proposals, including level-funding school spending for this year. They said delaying budget votes would provide the time to undertake such study. Many members who spoke in opposition to the amendment stated their support of the work already completed by school boards and school administrators. One member described the Governor's plan as "too much, too late." The amendment was voted down by a vote of 48 – 87. You can view the full results of the roll call vote [here](#).

Although the Governor's budget proposals will likely not affect school district budgets for fiscal year 2018, our associations expect that the General Assembly will fully consider some form of cost containment for subsequent fiscal years. We also continue to be concerned with Governor Scott's plan to shift \$118 million of General Fund responsibilities to the Education Fund, as well as \$15.6 million in new spending for non PK-12 education programs. These proposals will be discussed in more detail in the next week's *Education Legislative Report*.