

USEA Legislative Updates

March 9, 2010

HB 2, which is the primary funding bill for State agencies and Higher Education, passed both houses today. However, [SB 2: Minimum School Program Budget Amendments \(Public Education Funding bill\)](#) has not been released and the Executive Appropriations Committee meeting, which was scheduled for this evening, was again cancelled.

We are still working to bring funding for public education up to at least current levels and to fund growth for the 11,000 new students entering the system.

[First Substitute HB 166: Reductions to Education Mandates](#)

As we have reported in previous updates, this bill would reduce the mandated transportation of secondary school students to only those students living more than three miles from school (**instead of the present two miles**). *USEA opposed* this bill and believes that the above change is not in the best interests of Utah students.

A substantial percentage of high school students rely on school busses to get to school. Those students would have to devote substantial time to walking or taking public transportation (if available) to and from school and many will simply stop attending school. Those students that are able to secure other transportation will increase traffic and pollution near schools.

Because districts will still have to send busses to pick up those students farthest away, it is likely that total bus mileage and operating time might not be reduced as much as would appear at first glance.

In addition, this change would result in additional reductions to pupil transportation funding for school districts and negatively impact our members.

We have been encouraging legislators to amend the bill to eliminate the change to the student transportation mandate and return to a two mile requirement. Fortunately, Senator Wayne Niederhauser amended the bill today, **which brings the requirement back to two miles**.

While the amendment resolves our concerns for pupil transportation, this bill still has a long way to go over the next two days. The bill, as amended, still needs to pass a third reading in the Senate before being returned to the House for further action.

[Second Substitute HB 295: Expanded Use of School District Property Tax Revenue](#)

This bill would allow school districts the flexibility to use funding for capital projects (construction, renovations, etc.) to be used for general school district operations. This legislation is very important to school districts that are having financial challenges in their maintenance and operations (M&O) budgets.

USEA supports this legislation, which may save reductions to programs and staff.

[First Substitute SB 77: School District Leave Policies](#)

This bill would prohibit a local school board from granting paid association leave for certain employee association or union duties. It would also require reimbursement to a school district for the costs of employees, including benefits, for the time that exceeds 10 business days that the employee is on unpaid association leave or participating in certain paid association leave activities.

This bill passed the Senate on March 2nd but failed in the House of Representatives today. **USEA opposed** this bill because this is a local issue and should be decided by elected local school boards, rather than by State mandate.

Only two days left in the 2010 legislative session. However, it is not too late for you to help by contacting your Representatives and Senators. ***Ask your legislators to support funding for public education, with no reduction to current WPU funding. Please ask them to also fund growth, which is additional funding for the 11,000 plus new students entering the system this coming year.***

You can reach your Representative and Senator at the following links:

[Utah House of Representatives](#)

[Utah State Senate](#)

Thank you for your help and your support of the Utah School Employees Association!

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