

Legislative Update 26

Monday, October 19, 2009

All of us who work in Government Relations at UT occasionally hear grumblings that the State of Ohio is too involved in higher education. Of course, UT is a state institution and we receive ample funding from the state for instructional subsidies, scholarships, and research. This funding requires offices, faculty members, and others to report to the state in various ways to justify these expenditures.

However, if you are one of those who think that the governor and/or the General Assembly is too involved in Ohio higher education, just be glad you don't work in K-12 public education. For example, this week in the Ohio House and Senate, ten different bills involving public K-12 education are scheduled for hearings in the House Education Committee (3 bills) and Senate Education Committee (7 bills). Three of these bills deal with school violence and law enforcement (**HB 83**, **SB 122**, and **SB 126**), including one bill (**SB 126**) about school bullying sponsored by a northwest Ohio senator. Other bills deal with dropout programs (**SB 102**), school performance ratings (**SB 167**), and even dating relationships (**HB 19**). Interestingly enough, this last bill is also about violence in relation to dating.

However, the most important K-12 legislation in some time will be introduced in the House this week. **HB 318**, the "Education Funding Protection Act," is the legislation which will delay a 4.2% income tax cut for this year. This delay is in response to the Ohio Supreme Court holding up implementation of the budget plan to put slot machines at Ohio race tracks. Why this is important to K-12 is that the slots would have been part of the Ohio Lottery and all lottery funding goes to K-12. The public schools would have lost \$850 million in the budget.

But whether it's money or school violence, why are legislators seemingly more interested in K-12 public education instead of higher education?

We don't think they necessarily are more interested. But K-12 is more a factor in their political lives. A state senator might have two or three institutions of higher education in his/her district; a state representative might not even have one. But all legislators have dozens of public school districts. And, of course, voters are very aware of what is going on in their individual own district. Legislators better be aware as well or they will be voted out of office.

So, the next question is whether or not all this legislation is appropriate management for the public good or unnecessary micro-managing for political gain? Since your UT Government Relations staff wants to stay in good graces, we're maintaining it's appropriate management for the public good. While we tend to stay aware of the types of bills listed above, we also tend not to offer opinions on them either. But there are several university groups who do monitor this type of legislation closely. For example, UT's College of Education administration, faculty, and students have an obvious interest on

how these bills once they become law may change public education policy and affect teaching and learning.

(Full disclosure alert: Yes, one of us listed below has a spouse who is the president of the Toledo Public Schools' Board of Education.)

WEB

You now can view all past Legislative Updates at our UT Government Relations Web site. Click: http://www.utoledo.edu/offices/government_relations/legislativeupdates.html.

OFFICE

The University of Toledo Office of Government Relations sends out an update every Monday concerning the status of selective bills affecting higher education and UT as well as other government information. Please distribute as widely as you see fit.

Also, feel free to call or send e-mails to our office with comments and questions. Full versions of bills may be found at this Ohio government Web site:

[http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/search.cfm#bill number](http://www.legislature.state.oh.us/search.cfm#bill_number) . Please note that bills are not always posted in a timely fashion, may not be the current version, and may not include added amendments.

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