

DKG Tribune

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Raise Your Voice for a Better Michigan! (from AFT of Michigan)

In the past year, Lansing has slashed education budgets to give tax breaks to corporations. Limits have been placed on our ability to come together to collectively bargain our wages, benefits, working conditions and even evaluations. Many members are having 3% taken out of their checks for retiree health care; and if you have health care, you are likely paying more under the “80/20” or “hard cap” law. All of these things affect your ability to take care of your family and do your job. We try and stop these things by lobbying the Legislature and when we need to, we go to the courts. But the reality is that if we don’t like WHAT is happening in Lansing, then we need to change WHO is in Lansing making those decisions

Senate bans graduate assistants from unionizing (from MEA website)

The Senate acted quickly on Wednesday, February 22, 2012, to make sure graduate student research assistants wouldn’t have a say in whether they could unionize or not. SB 971 was introduced last week, passed on a party-line vote by the Government Operations Committee on Tuesday and passed on the Senate floor on a 26-12 party line vote on Wednesday. Currently, graduate assistants at the University of Michigan are trying to unionize and have applied to the Michigan Employment Relations Commission (MERC) to hold a union vote. If they’re successful, they will overturn a 1981 MERC ruling that says graduate research assistants are students. MERC has yet to rule on the application. The state labor commission is scheduled to finally give the U of M research assistants a decision on March 13.

Senate Majority Leader Randy Richardville (R-Monroe) sponsored SB 971, noting that the Legislature needed to move on the issue, regardless of what MERC does. Republicans claim that research assistants are students—not employees. SB 971 would amend PERA’s definition of a “public employee” to exclude the research assistants. But, this proposed legislation does more than that. These individuals would be stripped of their right to vote for a union and ultimately deprived of any collective bargaining rights.

U of M Board of Regents voted to oppose SB 971.

Senate Minority Leader Gretchen Whitmer (D-East Lansing) compared the bill to the Emergency Manager law and said, “This continues a theme from the majority party. If you don’t like the outcome of an election, change the rules

Scores of districts request teacher evaluation waiver

More than 344 public and charter school districts across the state are already asking the Governor's Council on Education Effectiveness for exemptions from adopting a uniform teacher evaluation system by 2013. The deadline for filing was November 1. The Council must submit their recommendations to the Governor and the Department of Education by April 30

**Just because you do not take an interest in politics
doesn't mean politics won't take an interest in you.**

...Pericles (430 B.C.)

Committee Mark-up Soon

This week, the House Committee on Education and the Workforce Chairman held a hearing on two new ESEA reauthorization bills – the Student Success Act (H.R. 3989) and the Encouraging Innovation and Effective Teachers Act (H.R. 3990). A “mark-up” where the committee debates amendments to the bills and votes on sending them to the full House could take place at the end of the month, right after the congressional Presidents’ Day recess.

NEA conveyed a number of concerns about the Kline bills to the committee, starting with the lack of commitment to ensuring equity in education for all students. NEA believes that every student, regardless of poverty, disability, or other challenges, deserves access to a quality education. We are also very concerned with the draft Kline bills’ elimination of requirements that states maintain their level of funding for education. Without these requirements, states facing budget crises will certainly cut funding for education, leaving millions of students without the resources they need to succeed.

Take Action Today: Educators working in schools and classrooms across the country are the best and most effective voices to ensure a good ESEA reauthorization bill. Your experience and expertise are critical to the debates in Congress and policymakers need to hear what you have to say. [Contact your Representative](#) today to give your thoughts about what will work best for your students and school

FROM THE DKG U.S. FORUM CONNECTION

SAFE SCHOOLS IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2011

This act is designed to deal with bullying in schools. The provisions are Safe Schools Improvement Act of 2011 (S.506,HR.1648) Amends the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 to require states, on an ongoing basis, to: (1) collect and report certain information on bullying and harassment by youth in their elementary and secondary schools and communities; (2) conduct, and report the results of, a needs assessment for bullying and harassment prevention programs; and (3) provide technical assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools in their efforts to thwart bullying and harassment. This act would require LEAs to: (1) include clear prohibitions against bullying and harassment within their discipline policies; (2) establish and monitor performance indicators for incidents of bullying and harassment; and (3) establish grievance procedures students, parents, and educators can use to redress such conduct. Directs LEAs to notify parents, students, and educators annually on: (1) the bullying and harassment prohibited by their discipline policies, (2) the numbers and nature of bullying and harassment incidents for each of their schools, and (3) grievance procedures for redressing such conduct. Requires: (1) the Secretary of Education to conduct, and report on, an independent biennial evaluation of programs to combat bullying and harassment in elementary and secondary schools; and (2) the Commissioner for Education Statistics to collect data, that are subject to independent review, to determine the incidence and prevalence of bullying and harassment in elementary and secondary schools in this country. (This information is from the Library of Congress web site at <http://thomas.loc.gov/cgi-bin/bdquery/z?d112:HR01648:@@D&summ2=m&/home/LegislativeData.php>)

CONTACT ADDRESSES FOR GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

U.S. GOVERNMENT CONTACT INFORMATION can be obtained through Congressional Switchboard 1-866-327-8670 (this is a toll free number). You can contact your Congressman and Senator through this number without paying long distance charges.

<http://www.house.gov/> for members of the House of Representatives <http://www.senate.gov/> for members of the U.S. Senate

White House 1-202-456-1111

Editor: Judy Foster, State Legislative Chairman