

Capitol News

January 30, 2017

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Friday proved to be a dramatic end to a busy Week 3 at the Legislature, with Democrats attempting to temporarily take control of the Senate. This opportunity arose when a Republican senator's resignation to take a federal job resulted in a 24-24 tie. The Democrats' goal was to bring a bill dealing with school levies to a vote. In the end, the Democrats failed in their parliamentary procedures and a vote was never taken.

Also newsworthy on Friday was the Senate Republicans' release of their plan to fully fund basic education with a new statewide property tax. The plan would also take away school districts' ability to approve local levies to pay for basic education. Earlier this month, Democrats issued broad recommendations that included raising teacher salaries. And Democrats have proposed a mix of taxes including a capital gains tax and a carbon emissions tax. As these various proposals are released, (hopefully) legislators are getting closer to negotiating an education funding plan.

Great news! Our years of service bill in the House, HB 1374, will be heard in the House Appropriations Committee on Thursday. WSLHA will be testifying in support of this bill, along with our partners from the Physical Therapy Association of Washington (PTWA), the Washington Occupational Therapy Association (WOTA), and the School Nurse Organization of Washington (SNOW). WEA is also a key partner and will be signing in "in support" of the bill. In other news...two telemedicine bills were introduced last week. SB 5436 broadens the settings in which telemedicine can be practiced to any location that the patient deems appropriate. SB 5457 requires health plans to reimburse services delivered via telemedicine at the same rate as if they had been delivered in person.

Finally this week, WSLHA signed in "in support" of two bills regarding hearing loss. SB 5179 requires medicaid coverage for hearing aids. SB 5178 requires the Department of Health to develop a hearing loss education program for health care professions.

Upcoming Events

Health Care & Wellness (House) - HHR A, JLOB - 1/31 @ 8:00am

- HB 1043 - Exec Session - Addressing nonpublic personal health information.
- HB 1239 - Exec Session - Concerning requests for medical records to support an application for social security benefits.

Health Care (Senate) - SHR 2, - 1/31 @ 10:00am

- SB 5368 - Public Hearing - Limiting the authority to seek medicaid waivers.

Human Services, Mental Health & Housing (Senate) - SHR 2, - 1/31 @ 1:30pm

- SB 5400 - Public Hearing - Concerning disclosure of health-related information with persons with a close relationship with a patient.

Higher Education (House) - HHR D, JLOB - 2/1 @ 1:30pm

- HB 1440 - Public Hearing - Establishing a student loan bill of rights.

Appropriations (House) - HHR A, JLOB - 2/2 @ 3:30pm

- HB 1374 - Public Hearing - Concerning the calculation of years of service for educational staff associate positions for salary allocation purposes.
- HB 1560 - Public Hearing - Addressing plan membership default provisions in the public employees' retirement system, the teachers' retirement system, and the school employees' retirement system.

WSLHA High Priority Bills

| Bill # | Abbrev. Title | Short Description | Status | Sponsor | Position |
|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|--|---------------|---------|----------|
| HB 1264 | Hearing devices for adults | Specifying medical assistance coverage for hearing devices for adults. | H HC/Wellness | McBride | Support |
| HB 1374 (SB 5283) | Ed. staff assocs/service yrs | Concerning the calculation of years of service for educational staff associate positions for salary allocation purposes. | H Approps | Dolan | Support |
| SB 5177 | Hearing loss training | Requiring long-term care workers to be trained to recognize hearing loss. | S Health Care | Bailey | |
| SB 5178 | Hearing loss education prog. | Requiring the Department of Health to develop a hearing loss education program for health care professionals. | S Health Care | Bailey | |
| SB 5179 | Hearing instrument coverage | Requiring coverage for hearing instruments under public employee and Medicaid programs. | S Health Care | Bailey | Support |
| SB 5283 (HB 1374) | Ed. staff assocs/service yrs | Concerning the calculation of years of service for educational staff associate positions for salary allocation purposes. | S EL/K-12 | Warnick | Support |