

# Capitol Insider

January 29, 2016

## **Mid-Way -- Less One Week**

Here we are at flip-to-the-other-chamber time, and teachers and public schools continue to get kicked, punched, ignored, and even chastised for expecting to be heard.

## **Action on Bills Important to AFT Indiana**

The House Let me start at the end of the legislative week and go backwards. In House Education on Thursday, Rep. Melanie Wright brought her bill (HB1323 <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2016/bills/house/1323>) seeking flexibility for school administrators and leaders in the mandated 90-minutes of uninterrupted reading in K-6 schools.

Several teachers and administrators from around the state drove to Indianapolis for the 8:30 AM hearing and an opportunity to speak. Instead Chairman Behning stated at the outset that the bill would be the last on the agenda and he would not be moving the bill. In other words, he'd hear it if there were time; not moving the bill would mean immediate death.

Vice Chair Rhonda Rhoads took over the committee when Behning left to present bills in another committee. Once Wright's bill was presented, Rhoads called on the only opposition speaker – a former Bennett regime staffer who credited her own work back then with all everyone ever needed. Rhoads was about to adjourn the hearing, but someone must have nudged her to hear at least one of the many who'd come to speak in support. Expecting that she'd call on those who'd traveled here for that purpose, I was expecting just to cover whatever they didn't. Needless to say, I was surprised when she called on me. Have you ever wanted a do-over? This is one of those for me. I apologize to all of you, especially to Rep. Wright, that I didn't elaborate more than I did. Although the committee members needed to be in the Chambers for their 10 o'clock session, I should have taken their time to tell them more than I did. I'm sorry. One point I did make was the irony of even needing to have a 90-minute uninterrupted period for reading when reading is NOT even on the mandated curriculum for schools. What's more Behning refused to hear a bill last year that would have put reading in the curriculum.

Another major slap in the face to Supt. Ritz, all teachers, and the 50 members of Ritz's Blue Ribbon Commission on the Recruitment and Retention of Excellent Educators (BRC) and especially to the author Rep. Randy Truitt of HB 1339 (<http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2016/bills/house/1339>) that passed out of House Education 11-1. The bill addressed all of the areas that the BRC determined were vital to addressing teacher shortages in Indiana. This included mentoring for all new teachers; it included new (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> year) teacher raises even to those who needed improvement. The bill was sent to Ways & Means because initially the bill would have required an appropriation (usually not given in a non-budget year), but that provision was later delayed for implementation until 2017 (a budget

year). However, once in Ways & Means, the bill was not acted upon therefore sending it to its immediate death as well.

Had enough? Well, continuing to move is HB 1395 – ISTEP Matters - (<http://iga.in.gov/legislative/2016/bills/house/1395>), the bill gives the State Board of Ed authority to require a rescoring of the 2015 ISTEP at the cost of \$8-\$10 million – could be more “depending on the quantity and type of reports required.” What we don’t know is from where the \$8-\$10 million comes. (The cost of mentoring in the now-dead HB 1339 was less than this for 1 year – and was presumably the reason 1339 was killed.)

Remember, elections are coming. Don’t be hood-winked by deceptive “oh, we got your performance money to you as fast as we could” or “I voted for the *amendment* that would have restored your bargaining rights in HB blah blah blah [**then voted against the bill**].” The rude and arrogant behaviors of legislative leadership have put me over the edge this week. Can you tell?

The Senate The Senate came at us with SB 10 that continues to gouge our right to bargain. Last year we were prohibited from bargaining salary for master’s degrees – the right to give salary was given solely to administrators. This bill adds the prohibition of bargaining supplemental pay for the “attainment of either additional degrees or credit hours beyond the requirement for employment.”

**Call your Senator NOW. Tell him/her to vote NO on SB 10.** Need to find out who your Senator is and how to contact him/her? Go to <https://iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/>.

**Expansion of vouchers continues in SB 334.** Currently the window for applications for vouchers is March 1 – September 1. The bill opens a second window beginning September 2 – January 15. The projected fiscal on this increase is about \$2.1 million for one semester. Additionally, if a voucher student withdrew from a private school, the pro-rated portion had to be returned. Last year almost \$400,000 was returned. The bill eliminates this provision at an estimated cost of \$800,000! Change \$2.1 million to nearly \$3 million.

*Get engaged. Begin today -- make calls to your legislators, send emails, see them when they are home on the weekends. **Remember.** Yes, remember the disrespect of this leadership and CHANGE that come election time.*

## **CALENDAR**

Feb. 3 – 3rd reading deadline (bills will go to next chamber)  
Mar. 3 – 3<sup>rd</sup> reading for 2<sup>nd</sup> chamber; bills to conference committees  
Mar. 12 – Presidents’ Council; AFT Indiana Exec Bd meeting  
Mar. 14 – Legislature must adjourn by statute; special sessions can be called  
May 6-7 – AFT Indiana annual convention; Anderson, IN