

Legislative Report — October 2018

Ballots are in mailboxes across Washington as ½ of the seats in the State Senate and all 98 seats in the State House are up for election. While gerrymandering makes most districts “safe” for one party or the other, there are a handful of competitive races.

Some pundits have said that as many as 18 House seats to flip from R to D, and there are three or four Senate seats that might be in play. Ballots are due November 6th.

What that could mean is:

Biennium	House	Senate
2017-19 (current)	50 D – 48 R	25 D – 24 R
2019-21 (potential starting Jan 14 th)	68 D – 30 R	28 D – 21 R

Meanwhile, even with unanticipated revenue flowing into the state treasury, it is unlikely there will be profligate spending. As the Ways and Means Committee Chair succinctly put it: the unanticipated revenue is about enough to fund the negotiated collective bargaining agreements (CBA’s) with state employees, and not much more.

However, the so-called “teacher shortage” will be near the top of the legislative agenda – an agenda that will be topped with attention to mental health issues (state hospital certification and a federal court settlement in a case called “Trueblood,” and adding behavioral health professionals in schools).

There is also discussion of increasing the PESB capacity to support micro-credentials related to social-emotional learning (SEL).

The “school safety” initiative is centered on addressing mental / behavioral health needs in schools. I mention this because it will affect the environment into which you send candidates. The specifics are still being worked out, so there’s not much detail to share.

And, as was the case last session, the debate over addressing the teacher shortages as it affects teacher preparation programs centers, in some part, on the questions of who controls any conditional scholarships to attract candidates and what is the criteria.

The Student Achievement Council is [asking for \\$1 million / year for the “teacher shortage” conditional scholarships](#) that were created at WACTE’s suggestion a few years ago. We are now in year two of the only cohort to have been funded, and at last report there was a 100% persistence rate for the candidates – 94% or more who are low income, people of color, who speak more than one language.

The PESB, on the other hand, is [asking for \\$4.238 million / year in additional funding primarily for alternative route scholarships](#). These are tied to specific, agency-approved programs and do not appear to be needs-based.

WACTE needs to articulate a position on the question of needs-based, targeted, “shortage” scholarships to use as the candidate deems appropriate; or agency-controlled alternative route scholarships.

School Finance – There will be an effort to further increase funding for K-12 schools, both to address what is an admitted shortage of funding for special education and to address districts that may have over-committed in contract negotiations with significant salary increases.

West-B – the PESB has raised the idea of eliminating the requirement to pass the West-B to be admitted to a preparation program. Be aware that this is a proposal that could lead to unintended negative results. This could easily open the door to alternative *certification* rather than alternative *routes to certification* (i.e., just pass a test and become a teacher — no educational requirements beyond content). And while I understand that views vary widely among WACTE members, it would be good to get some feedback and determine whether WACTE has a position on this issue, and, if so, what that position is. This change would require a change in the underlying statute.

Discussions / Decisions:

- Support PESB “Teacher Shortage” decision package?
- Support Student Achievement Council “Teacher Shortage” conditional scholarships?
- Some combination of the two (support/oppose pieces of each)?

- West-B – WACTE position (if any) on eliminating requirement to pass West-B?

- WACTE support for additional mental health professionals in schools? (Licensed Social Workers, Licensed Mental Health Counselors)?