

\Prepared Notes for Board Meeting
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Tonight, a legislative update that is bound to leave some of us cold...

Receiving 1st hearings this coming Wednesday are 3 bills:

House Bill 281 criminalizes the use of nicotine or any substance containing nicotine in Ohio school buildings, doubtless a response to e-cigarettes.

House Bill 303 mandates permission for students to engage in religious expression, including prayer, religious gatherings or the distribution of written materials of a religious nature on school grounds to the same extent that students can engage in secular activities.

House Bill 367 mandates instruction in prescription opioid abuse prevention.

Receiving first hearings last week were:

House Bill 304 was companion legislation to HB303 mandating that students who wish to meet for the purpose of engaging in religious expression have the same access to school facilities as student secular groups.

House Bill 58 would eliminate the power of the Governor to appoint members to the State Board of Education and defines a new makeup of that body using the state's congressional districts and the not the senatorial districts to define state board of education districts.

House Bill 158 is a back door for the state to fund charter schools without it looking like the state is funding charter schools. Essentially, HB158 allows a non-refundable Ohio tax credit, dollar for dollar, against contributions to a nonprofit educational scholarship fund. An individual could contribute up to \$1000 and other taxpayers, presumably including corporations, could contribute up to \$300,000. The educational scholarship fund could then distribute the money for scholarships. Essentially, rather than the tax going into the state's general fund, it flows to fund vouchers and it does so in a way that obfuscates the true cost of the vouchers.

Finally, House Bill 343 would eliminate the authority and requirement of the Superintendent of a School District to approve underage kids taking the GED and allows adults ages 22 to 29 access to dropout prevention programs provided those programs also operate adults basic and literacy education (ABLE) programs.

It's my intention this year to apprise the Board of bills that are introduced in the House Education Committee because I think it's important to understand legislation before it gets far enough for OSBA et. al. to keep us informed. For example, if our district had objection to any of the above pieces of legislation, it would be more efficient to contact the sponsoring member of the legislature now while the bill is in its infancy than wait until statewide education organizations get involved, and since the House Education Committee is nice enough to send out their agendas, this becomes feasible.