

**February 24, 2017**

## **This Week at the State Capitol**

*Kentucky General Assembly's 2017 session passes halfway mark*

FRANKFORT -- With the first half of the General Assembly's 2017 session in the rear view mirror, some of the session's major bills have already passed into law while matters like criminal justice reform and education initiatives continue to make steady progress through the legislative process.

Further work on strengthening the state's troubled public pension system was among the matters that advanced in the House of Representatives this week. Senate Bill 2, which the House approved on a 99-0 vote, is aimed at making state retirement system more transparent and accountable.

The legislation would provide better oversight of those serving on state retirement system boards, tighten requirements for investment experience, and hold retirement system board members, staff and investment advisers to the same standard code of conduct followed by the larger investment community. It would also codify a reorganization of the Kentucky Retirement Systems board that was called for in an executive order issued by the governor last year. Senate Bill 2 now returns to the Senate for final passage.

In the Senate, a major higher education bill was among the measures that advanced this week. Senate Bill 20 would direct that universities be funded in accordance with performance-based measures that align with Kentucky's top postsecondary education goals.

Supporters of the legislation say it will phase out a funding model that, instead of basing funding on educational success, bases it on how much a school received in a previous budget cycle.

The legislation is the result of a work group made up of the president of the Council on Postsecondary Education, university presidents, state budget officials and legislators. The group's final report endorsed the Council on Postsecondary Education's goal of raising the percentage of Kentuckians with postsecondary degrees or certificates from the current level of 45 percent to 58 percent by 2025.

Under Senate Bill 153, the postsecondary funding formula would appropriate 35 percent of funds based on student success tied to outcomes, 35 percent would be tied to total student credit hours, and 30 percent would be based on supporting vital campus operations.

The funding model established by SB 153 would be phased in over several years. A postsecondary work group would review the results of the new funding approach every three years to see if it is successful and make recommendations to the General Assembly.

Senate Bill 153 was approved by the Senate on a 36-1 vote and now goes to the House for consideration.

Other bills that took steps forward this week include the following:

**House Bill 13** would authorize \$10.5 million in state bond funds for construction of a state veterans' nursing home in Bowling Green. Kentucky's four state veterans' nursing homes are currently in Hazard, Wilmore, Hanson and Radcliff. The measure passed the House and has been sent to the Senate.

**Senate Bill 120** would help make sure that who leave prison can successfully rejoin society and turn away from crime. The legislation includes improved reentry substance abuse supervision and would remove government licensing restrictions in order to expand job opportunities for those with records. The bill passed the Senate and now goes to the House for consideration.

**House Bill 112** would protect landlords from liability if a tenant's dog bites someone. The bill was approved by the House and delivered to the Senate for consideration.

**House Bill 180** would allow children removed from their homes by the state to be placed with a close family friend, such as a neighbor or babysitter, even if that person isn't related by birth, adoption or marriage. The measure was approved by the Senate Health and Welfare Committee and now awaits action in the full Senate.

**House Bill 241** would specify in statute that a student-athlete suspected of sustaining a concussion can not return to a practice or competition until cleared by a physician to do so. The legislation was approved by the House and has been delivered to the Senate for consideration.

With so many big issues moving through the Legislature, it's an important time for citizens to stay in touch with lawmakers and share their views on the issues that will be voted on in the days to come. There are several easy ways citizens can provide their feedback to the General Assembly.

The Kentucky Legislature Home Page, [www.lrc.ky.gov](http://www.lrc.ky.gov), provides information on each of the Commonwealth's senators and representatives, including phone numbers, addressees, and committee assignments. The site also provides bill texts, a bill-tracking service, and committee meeting schedules.

To leave a message for any legislator, call the General Assembly's Message Line at 1-800-372-7181. People with hearing difficulties may leave messages for lawmakers by calling the TTY Message Line at 1-800-896-0305.