

Hi SAMLN17 Members!

Highlights of Week 14 (April 3-7)

Week 14 saw a tremendous amount of action on bills that SAM has been tracking throughout the session. Amendments are being made to school funding and infrastructure bills as it appears the legislature is close to completing its work. Click [SAM Bills Status by Priority Report 4-8-17](#) to see the latest update on all 104 bills tracked by SAM. Click [SAMLN17 Schedule Week 14 Apr 3-7 revised 4-7-17](#) to see the schedule of hearings and changes that occurred during the week. I waited until Saturday to provide this update as both the Senate and House had floor sessions with bills we are watching with SAM priority designation.

School Funding and Taxation

[HB 2](#) (General Appropriations Act), passed the Senate with some amendments, keeping in place the funding of the Data for Achievement payment, Special Ed funding, Montana Digital Academy funding and the increased enrollment funding. HB 2 has been returned to the House with amendments. The companion bill to HB2 is [HB 647](#) (Generally revise education funding, implement general appropriations bill), passed the Senate this morning [39-7](#) and is returned to the House with amendments. See the Comments about School Funding below.

School Facilities and Technology Infrastructure

[SB 307](#) (Revise K-12 school funding laws to address facilities), passed the House on Friday [76-23](#) and is returned to the Senate with amendments.

[HB 390](#) (Generally revise school funding laws), was amended in Senate Ed and then passed out of committee. This bill is headed to the Senate floor next week. This bill has the \$2 million state match for leveraging \$20 million in E-Rate funds for Montana schools broadband build.

[HB 645](#) (Provide funding for capital and infrastructure projects statewide), the House version of the statewide infrastructure bill is probably dead failing on 3rd reading in the house [42-58](#). Because of the bonding language in the bill it requires 2/3 vote to pass.

[SB 367](#) (Generally revise infrastructure funding laws), was heard in House Appropriations Committee on Friday and is likely to see Executive Action early next week. This is the last bill left for statewide infrastructure. As it currently exists there is \$30 million for Quality Schools Grant Program school facility projects. This bill will require the 2/3 vote to pass.

Privatization with Public Funds

[HB 376](#) (Establish public charter schools) was tabled in the Senate Education and Cultural Resources Committee on Wednesday 4/5! This is the last of the bills in this session to promote using public funds to privatize education.

Other Bills of Interest this Week

[HB 118](#) (Revise and provide additional funding for suicide prevention activities), 2nd reading concurred in the Senate 43-3.

[HB 134](#) (Revise school funding related to facilities), passed in Senate Ed and then was rereferred to Senate Finance and Claims.

[HB 617](#) (Provide for licensure of specialists in educational psychology), was heard and then tabled in Senate Public Health, Welfare, and Safety late yesterday afternoon.

[SB 227](#) (Revise state school transportation reimbursement laws), was reconsidered yesterday and approved, it is now scheduled for another 2nd reading on Monday.

[SB 242](#) (Encourage high schools to administer civics test), passed 3rd reading [67-32](#) and was sent to Enrolling.

[SB 260](#) (Create school facilities subtrust within coal tax trust fund), passed 3rd reading in the House [89-10](#) and was sent to Enrolling.

Upcoming Week 15 (April 10-14)

Click [SAMLN17 Schedule Week 15 Apr 10-14 revised 4-8-17](#) to see the Committee hearing schedule – which is very light as the work is nearly complete.

Comments about School Funding as the End of the Session Draws Near

This week, I met with the NWMASS and the NCMASS to discuss progress in the legislature. Dennis Parman on behalf of MREA met with the 4 Rivers MASS. At those meetings, many concerns were expressed about HB 2 and HB 647 because of possible shifts in taxation to local tax payers in order to meet the funding the state appears to be providing for K-12 schools through HB 191 and other education funding bills. An email dialogue on the MASS list serve ensued yesterday (Friday) around this topic and I responded to the questions and comments with the following that I want all SAMLN17 members to be aware of...

Being as the session is still going on and the final passage of bills to determine school funding has not been decided, I would request that you hold off on providing any explanation of figuring out what impact the end result has on the budget and taxation in your district. With amendments still being considered on bills at a rapid pace, I believe the best use of your time will be to wait and see what the final package approved by the legislature will be.

I have met with the NWMASS and NCMASS this week and Dennis Parman met with the 4RMASS explaining the potential impacts on our schools. I know that this is disconcerting and that you will all want to be able to have the facts and the figures for sharing the impacts on your district. What I will assure you is when the final decisions are made by the legislature (hopefully in the next week and a half) that we will get together with MT-PEC and craft a document that will provide each school district with what happened through legislation, and the impact on school district budgets and taxation. We will write this in a format that you can use to help explain this to your School Board and community so that you have the ability to inform all who will be impacted.

I can appreciate the stress of the uncertainty and the daily changes that have been presented to you through our efforts to keep everyone informed about legislative action. My request is that you give a few more days to determine the final outcome and then, I assure you I will work with MT-PEC to get you information that will help you with the facts of the impact of the legislative session.

Thanks to all of you for your patience and your great work throughout the session to do the best we can for our schools and the students we serve.

General Information

Click [SAM General Bills Still Active](#) to review the bills SAM is tracking that are still alive. You can follow the bills that are SAM advocacy priorities by clicking on the priority area ...

- [SAM School Funding Bills](#)
- [SAM Privatization with Public Fund Bills](#)
- [SAM Recruitment & Retention Bills](#)
- [SAM Special Ed Funding Bills](#)
- [SAM Facility and Technology Infrastructure Bills](#)

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Please use the SAM website (www.sammt.org) as a resource for all things legislative under ‘Announcements’, then ‘[2017 Legislative Session](#)’. All information for the SAMLN17 is posted under ‘[SAM Legislative Network 2017](#)’ on the webpage. Each of the links in this Update are on the [SAM Legislative Network 2017](#) website. Contact us if you have questions. We hope this background is helpful to you as you share information with your colleagues in your area!

Kirk and Pat