

Legislative Review

A Look at Higher Education in Week 6: Feb. 9-13, 2009



Feb. 20 Crossover

The date by which all bills must pass out of the house of origin to the second house of the Legislature

Feb. 23 & 24 Crossover Recess

Concealed Weapons Bill Causes Continued Concern

The House Government and Veterans Affairs Committee acted on **HB 1348**, the concealed weapons bill, Friday, Feb. 13.

The committee recommended an amendment permitting weapons on NDUS campuses and "Do Pass" as amended on a vote of 9-4. The recommended amendment and bill now will be scheduled for a vote by the full House.

As introduced, the bill would have made it lawful for an individual who has a concealed weapons license to carry weapons at public events and public places, including NDUS campuses. The NDUS position on the bill is to request an amendment excluding NDUS campuses (to retain existing campus firearms bans except for - at some campuses - hunting guns that are permitted in designated storage areas) and, if the NDUS is not excluded, to oppose the bill.

The amendment recommended by the committee states that an individual who has a concealed weapons license or a valid North Dakota game license or who

has completed hunter education in North Dakota or any other state is authorized to carry firearms at North Dakota college and university campuses "on real property that is a dwelling unit or that unit's related parking and shared space." Also, the amendment states that a dwelling unit "does not include a dormitory."

If the amendment and the amended bill are adopted, an individual who meets any of the three criteria listed above will be authorized to have firearms in student or family apartments and residence halls (excluding only dormitories, a term that is not defined).

There are a number of serious concerns regarding the bill and the amendment.

The House will consider the proposed amendment and vote on the bill, possibly as early as the first part of next week. This bill carries tremendous implications and risk according to Chancellor Bill Goetz and should be defeated in the interest of the safety of our students.

Opportunity Grant Program Amended, Re-Referred

SB 2062, a bill to create the North Dakota Opportunity Grant Program, was re-referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee and heard by the committee Wednesday, Feb. 11.

As amended, SB 2062 now includes a \$3.8 million appropriation for \$1,000 student grants and designates responsibilities related to ensuring student success to the Joint Boards of Education.

In its original form, the SBHE supported this bill after full funding of the board's 2009-11 budget request.

The committee has not taken action on the bill.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Bill Re-Referred, Heard

SB 2412, the Fetal Alcohol Syndrome bill, was re-referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee and heard in committee Wednesday, Feb. 11.

This bill would grant \$369,900 in general funds to the North Dakota Department of Health for a grant to the UND Fetal Alcohol Syndrome Center. The committee asked for additional information about previous funding for the program.

No action was taken by the committee.

“Do Pass” Recommendation on Financial Literacy Education Resolution

HCR 3016, which urges school districts to offer a financial literacy course, was heard in the House Education Committee Monday, Feb. 9 and received a unanimous “Do Pass” recommendation Feb. 11.

Vice Chancellor Mike Hillman testified in support of financial literacy education in North Dakota schools. He told the committee a report on barriers to student financial access to college was provided to the SBHE in March 2008. This report recommended enhancing age-appropriate financial literacy education options for students and providing better access to financial planning information for parents.

HCR 3016 is consistent with the SBHE and Joint Boards of Education position on the need for improved financial literacy in North Dakota.

Tribal College Funding Bill Re-Referred, Heard in Committee

HB 1394, a bill to provide an appropriation for financial assistance to tribally controlled community colleges, was re-referred to the House Appropriations Committee, Education and Environment Division, and heard in committee Feb. 9.

The bill includes \$700,000 from the Permanent Oil Trust Fund to be administered by the NDUS Office. Vice Chancellor Mike Hillman provided brief testimony in support of the bill. In previous testimony to the House Education Committee, Chancellor Bill Goetz said the NDUS supports continued funding for the program. Funding for the program is expected to come from oil and gas tax revenues generated on the Ft. Berthold Reservation.

In 2007, the Legislative Assembly passed landmark legislation that provides state funding to tribal colleges in recognition of their service to non-tribal member students. No action has been taken by the House Appropriations Committee.

STEM and State Grant Award Increase Bill Re-Referred, Heard

SB 2226, a bill to increase state grant program and STEM/technology occupations grants from \$1,000 to \$2,000, was re-referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee and considered by the committee Monday, Feb. 9.

Vice Chancellor Laura Glatt testified in support of the bill, but asked the committee to reconsider an amendment adopted by the Senate Education Committee. This amendment would reduce the number of State Grant Awards made to students who attend private institutions and could potentially put biennial federal funding of about \$350,000 at risk by establishing an arbitrary cost of education for private schools. The amendment also would result in significant and cumbersome changes in administration of the program.

No committee action was taken.

Bills Failed This Week

- HB 1028** Added one-half unit of health to high school graduation requirements
- HB 1034** Provided an interim study of services to deaf or hearing-impaired; provided a \$100,000 appropriation
- HB 1065** Provided a \$1 million appropriation to the Department of Commerce for out-of-state student recruitment; provided a \$1.2 million appropriation for operation intern
- HB 1066** Permitted a primary sector innovation credit for qualified research expenses; provided a tax credit for lean manufacturing
- HB 1085** Provided an employment tax credit for apprenticeships
- HB 1190** Provided income tax credit for contributions to private higher education institutions
- HB 1203** Added board-designated endowment to the list of charitable gifts eligible for income tax credit
- HB 1283** Clarified the open meetings law to exempt chance or social discussion of business if it involves less than a quorum and no action is taken
- HB 1285** Limited participation by state employees in closed national, regional and state association meetings
- HB 1352** Created a state energy policy
- HB 1374** Required a geriatric medicine course as part of physician continuing education

- HB 1443** Added one-half unit of consumer finance to high school course requirements
- HB 1469** Related to use of K-12 textbooks for home school students
- HB 1480** Created a teacher mentorship program through a Department of Public Instruction grant to the Education Standards and Practices Board
- HB 1485** Increased from \$71 to \$110 million transfers to the permanent oil tax trust fund
- HB 1507** Required an annual UND-NDSU football game
- HB 1564** Added one-half unit of personal finance to high school course requirements
- SB 2205** Made it unlawful to prohibit any employee or other user of state network services from contacting legislators unless the purpose is political activity
- SB 2285** Created Department of Commerce satellite offices on the Indian reservations, including workforce development
- SB 2296** Provided a student loan reduction of 25 percent for each three years employed in North Dakota, up to 50 percent, for graduates of two-year programs or more in early childhood education and child development
- SB 2303** Provided a \$100,000 general fund appropriation to the North Dakota University System for grants to institutions to support retention of students from low-income families
- SB 2304** Established a North Dakota Center for Nursing Board; provided a \$650,000 appropriation
- SB 2315** Provided sales tax exemption on sale of books
- SB 2406** Created a Bank of North Dakota grant of \$1,000 to a college savings plan for children who remain tobacco free
- SB 2407** Provided a \$100,000 general fund appropriation for creating an NDUS virtual university; specified enrollment reporting requirements

On the Week Seven Agenda

- SB 2266 Mon., Feb. 16, 8:30 a.m., S-APPR:** Provides a \$4.9 million general fund appropriation to UND to fund a nursing simulation lab initiative