

Kentucky General Assembly Weekly Report

Week 5

February 3rd through February 7th (Legislative Days 19-23)

The fifth week of the 2020 session was host to a ramp-up in activity. Legislation is moving rapidly with a multitude of bills already passing both chambers and heading to the Governor's desk. So far, more than 550 bills have been introduced this session.

Two student safety measures received hours of floor debate this week. HB34 creates an incentive for school districts to adopt school bus stop-arm safety cameras. Rep. Robert Goforth fielded dozens of questions from members on Thursday afternoon about enforcement mechanisms, methods of appeals, and school district-vendor relationships before ultimately passing the measure by 86-5. It now heads to the Senate for their consideration. On Friday, the House passed SB8, the follow-up to last year's school safety bill. While the bulk of the bill has universal support, a provision requiring the arming of school resource officers (SROs) gave many African-American and urban Democratic members pause. The floor debate lasted nearly two hours, and floor amendments giving the school district the choice to arm SROs and requiring body cameras for armed SROs failed. Despite the lengthy discussion, the bill passed 78-8. It is one of several bills that have passed both chambers.

This session's "priority bills" have yet to sail through. SB1, the sanctuary cities bill, moved off the Senate Floor on Tuesday evening. House Republican John Blanton will carry that legislation in the House. SB2 (voter ID), SB3 (a constitutional amendment aligning Kentucky's statewide election years with federal election years, and SB5 (fiscal court oversight of special taxing districts) still await committee action in the House. SB4, which creates a new Transportation Board and codifies a more objective road priority scoring system, did receive an informational hearing this week. This is one to watch closely, as its fate is, at least for now, seemingly linked to the gas tax increase. HB1 was introduced last week but received no readings or hearings in the House.

Regarding the state budget, the Governor's Budget Director John Hicks testified in back-to-back Senate and House Appropriations and Revenue Committees on Tuesday. Hicks' assessment of the proposal contrasted with those of both the legislature and the media, whose initial reaction was that the budget is structurally imbalanced and underfunded the state pension system. The Budget Director's testimony attempted to dispel those notions, comparing this proposal's structural imbalance with those of the two most recent fiscal years and identifying that suggested caps on employer contribution rates into the pension system were offset elsewhere in budget. The legislative working groups reviewing the budget are still in the midst of their analysis, and they will slowly craft their own versions over the next several weeks.

Thursday, Democrat Governor Andy Beshear joined the state Chamber of Commerce and a bipartisan mix of sports wagering proponents to push for the passage of HB137. The bill passed overwhelmingly out of committee in early January but has not yet received a floor vote. Opponents of the bill, led by the Family Foundation, are claiming that the votes are not in the Senate. Senate Majority Floor Leader Damon Thayer disputed that on Wednesday, indicating the numbers, in fact, are there in the Senate. However, on Thursday, Senate President Robert Stivers told the *Courier-Journal* that he wasn't sure the votes were in his caucus to bring it to a vote. Stivers downplayed the

general fund revenue anticipated from the bill, among other concerns. House Speaker David Osborne and sponsor Adam Koenig remain optimistic about the bill's future.

Next week will be much the same, but with a renewed emphasis on budget review subcommittees. The deadline to file House and Senate bills is not until March 2nd and 3rd, respectively.

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