

LEGISLATIVE ALERT XVI
79TH SESSION OF THE NEVADA STATE LEGISLATURE
SATURDAY, MAY 27, 2017

It sounds like a broken record, but, another week, another deadline has come and gone with the FINAL Legislative deadline coming May 31 when budget bills are introduced. These bills are exempt from any previous deadlines. And after today, May 27, there are only 8 days remaining the 79th Session, as it is scheduled to end by midnight June 5.

Lawmakers have been having a lot of closed door negotiating leading up to June 5, as they continue wrangling with the touchy subject of ESA, also known as “vouchers” depending on who you talk to. The Governor has said there would be money in a final budget to fund the Education Savings Account, though he expects \$60 million, and according to news reports this week, the majority party has proposed half of that amount. So, the end game will likely come down to that one issue.

Meanwhile, the Senate continues to mow through their multiple agendas during their floor sessions this week, while the Assembly languished behind. In fact, their 11:30 a.m. floor session Friday, May 26, a big deadline day, didn’t begin until nearly 9:00 p.m.! Plus, it went past midnight, meaning they were not “supposed” to act on any bills not meeting the midnight deadline for action.

No matter, two of the major bills RPEN has been reporting on since the session began, Senate Bills 384 and 502, both met the final deadline and are headed to the Governor’s office. SB 384 received a last minute amendment changing the “identifying number” of a retired public employee to “name” of the retired public employee. The change was precipitated from a discussion RPEN’s Lead Lobbyist Marlene Lockard had with the Governor’s Chief of Staff, who said the Governor would only sign SB384 if it included NAME, PENSION and LAST EMPLOYER within the language of permissible identifying information. All other personal information such as marital status and beneficiary will remain confidential. SB 502 sailed through both houses with unanimous votes. This bill, from the Department of Administration, seeks to make a few adjustments to the Public Employees’ Benefits Program (PEBP) and Deferred Compensation. But it was greatly amended

from how it was introduced, into something RPEN could support. As readers of these “Legislative Alerts” know, RPEN was opposed to SB 80, which later went on to become SB 502, but once the bill was amended following several meetings between its sponsor and RPEN and other public employee representatives, it became a bill we wholeheartedly supported.

There were several bills RPEN has been following, and supporting, through our public employee coalition. Two collective bargaining bills made their way through the session. One, Assembly Bill 271, passed along party lines in both houses, only to be vetoed by the Governor. Another, Senate Bill 356, also passed both houses along party lines, and is headed to the Governor. A third, Senate Bill 469, also passed in both houses, again along party lines. So, it’s up to the Governor now on those two remaining bills.

The latest check on the “Share Your Opinion” page at the Legislature, which remains open until the session ends, reveals SB 384 in 22nd place on the top 50 bills mentioned there and SB 502 in 23rd place. Ironically, AB 71, a bill that sought to add a hybrid pension plan to the Nevada Public Employees’ Retirement System (PERS) was in 17th place, and this bill, introduced on behalf of Nevada State Controller Ron Knecht, didn’t meet the April 14 deadline for action, and never received a hearing! If you haven’t shared an opinion on any bills mentioned here, you have until the session ends to do so, and the site can be accessed by clicking <https://www.leg.state.nv.us/App/Opinions/79th2017/A/> or you can still contact your state representatives through a phone call at (775)-684-6827 in Northern Nevada or (702)-486-2626 in Southern Nevada; email; in-person visit when possible or a personal letter.

There is still a lot of work left to be done. As long as the lawmakers are meeting in Carson City, RPEN will be there too. As these alerts are done weekly, please be sure to follow RPEN on Facebook or at our website, www.rpen.org and if you know of someone who hasn’t yet joined RPEN, please encourage them to check us out. There is strength in numbers. We can’t say that enough! And while the session is winding down, now that the rules have been suspended, we need to be more diligent than ever. We also thank our public employee coalition, who have come together weekly and worked together on common interests.

Terri Laird, Executive Director