

Pre-Session Legislative Update for MACTE Members, 3.02.16
By Cyndy Crist, MACTE Legislative Policy Liaison

Here comes another session! Although they're not yet officially off and running, the pace of activity at the legislature is beginning to pick up as information-only hearings are being held in advance of the convening of the 2016 session on Tuesday, March 8. Among these were a joint hearing of the **House Education Policy Innovation and Education Finance committees** on Wednesday, February 17. The subject of that hearing was updates on rulemaking regarding out-of-state teacher licensure and licensure by portfolio. The majority of the time was spent with legislators hearing from, and asking questions of, BOT and Educator Licensing staff. About a dozen others testified, most expressing concerns about the current proposed rule language and/or need to improve the process by which those prepared outside Minnesota can become licensed. I testified on behalf of MACTE to assure committee members that contrary to some comments they may have heard or read in the media, MACTE does not oppose the portfolio process as one pathway to licensure but in fact sees it as more efficient than the process by which colleges and universities review and advise out-of-state candidates.

The **Senate Education Committee** has also held a number of hearings, including one on Monday, February 29 at which educational organizations were invited to share their priorities for 2016. I reported that MACTE's priorities remain relatively unchanged from 2015 and also focused on the foundational importance of, and our strong support for, state-level licensure and having a professional standards board. Many other organizations included teacher preparation and licensure issues among their legislative priorities, particularly as they involve addressing teacher shortages. At the same hearing, Paul Spies reported on the emerging work of the Coalition to Increase Teachers of Color and American Indian Teachers, of which MACTE is a member.

OLA Report. The long-anticipated report by the Office of the Legislative Auditor on the Board of Teaching and Educator Licensing is scheduled to be released on Friday, March 4. It will be the subject of a hearing by the Senate Education Committee on Thursday, March 10, and no doubt other legislative hearings and discussions as the session progresses. We are told it will be available on the OLA website by 10:00 a.m. on March 4. We expect to read it carefully and monitor discussions about it closely.

Preparing for the Session. Thanks to all those who indicated their potential interest and availability to provide research-based information, testify, and/or convene local meetings with legislators in 2016. I have compiled a database of names from the information provided and will be in contact with individuals as needed and appropriate as the session progresses. I would welcome reports on any meetings held to date with legislators, and especially information about any questions or concerns shared by legislators. It's never too late to be in touch with your legislators, so please continue to seek opportunities to inform them about the strengths, outcomes, needs, and future plans of your programs.

Visiting the Legislature in 2016. Just a reminder that the Capitol will remain closed to the public throughout the 2016 session. Senate committee hearings and floor sessions will be held in the new Senate Office Building immediately north of the Capitol, and all DFL senators have offices in the new building. As usual, House committees will meet in the State Office Building (SOB). All state representatives and all Republican senators are officed in the SOB. Their floor sessions will be held in the Capitol with limited or no public access.