

MACTE Weekly Legislative Report, 3.11.2016
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And They're Off. Legislators are now back and one week into the 2016 legislative session, and there is a high level of activity already with multiple hearings and literally hundreds of bill introductions. With only 11 weeks to complete their work, legislators are wasting no time in moving ahead with a wide array of issues. I will do my best to keep you up to date on developments relative to teacher preparation and licensure, but anyone who wants to know when specific bills are being heard in education committees may wish to subscribe on-line to committee mailing lists.

OLA Report the Subject of Senate and House Hearings. Both the Senate Education Committee and the House Education Finance Committees held hearings this week on the recent report by the Office of the Legislative Auditor (OLA) on teacher licensure. Auditor James Nobles opened each hearing with a brief overview, including a comment that while many have blamed the Board of Teaching for an array of problems identified in recent years, they are far from the only ones to blame and in fact have sometimes been blamed for things not within their immediate purview. Assistant Auditor Judy Randall then presented a detailed overview of the report. Among an array of questions and comments by individual legislators, it was heartening that there seemed a clear recognition that the problems need to be tackled carefully and thoroughly rather than hurriedly. As a result, it is likely that few if any major changes will be made before 2017. The House Education Policy Innovation Committee will be focusing on the OLA report and some related bills next Tuesday, March 15.

Bill Introductions. The list of bill introductions relevant to MACTE's work is already long and growing. They fall roughly into three categories: bills designed to increase teacher diversity; bills focused on/responding to recommendations in the OLA report; and bills addressing specific/narrow licensure issues. *Among the diversity bills*, some (SF 2516/HF 2815, SF 2553/HF 2560) would fund specific strategies in targeted communities while others (HF 2944/SF 2610) are broader in scope. *The bills of relevance to the OLA report* include several addressing tiered licensure (HF 2739/SF 2551), creating a legislative work group to develop recommendations based on the OLA report (HF 2814 and HF 2861), changing the structure of BOT (HF 2520 and HF 2824), and addressing shortage and out-of-state issues (SF 2513, SF 2433, SF 2434). *Other licensure bills* include SF 1782 (CTE licensure), SF 1386 (licensing school readiness teachers), SF 2470/HF 2622 (suicide prevention for licensure renewal), SF 2244 (music production licensure), HF 2732 (dual enrollment), and SF 2370 (special education program at Southwest MN State University).

Next Week at the Capitol. As of this writing, licensure-related bills are scheduled to be heard on 3.15 in House Education Policy Innovation and in Senate Education on 3.15, 3.16, and 3.17. I plan to attend the hearings on 3.15 and 3.17 and always welcome the attendance of interested and available MACTE members.