

MACTE Weekly Legislative Update, 1.06.17
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And They're Off!

The 2017 session of the Minnesota legislature was gavelled in on Tuesday, January 3, and it already appears that it will be a difficult and contentious session. This seemed likely even before the rhetoric began since the Republicans now hold the majority in both the House and Senate (though in the Senate, it's the slimmest of majorities with 34 Republicans and 33 Democrats) in contrast to DFL Governor Dayton. But already the Governor and the Republican leadership have released proposals with major funding implications that are significantly different. With the first week of the session drawing to a close, it is much too early to try to predict what will transpire between now and late May, but the term government shut-down is already being used.

New Education Committees in Place.

As reported in the pre-session update, there are once again two education committees in both the Senate and House, one focused on policy and the other on finance, after several years in which the Senate combined the two into a single committee. While most of the provisions of greatest interest to us are heard in the policy committee, all provisions generally end up in a single omnibus bill so it is important to follow the work of all four of these committees (and, of course, the higher education committees, though they tend to hear far fewer bills involving teacher preparation and licensure). The large number of new legislators and the increased Republican majority in the House have led to significant changes in the make up of these bodies. I encourage you to look up the roster of committee members to identify which members represent your campus, represent you, and/or may have a particular interest in your institution (as a graduate, for example). As a reminder, the chairs are Sondra Erickson, House Education Innovation Policy; Jenifer Loon, House Education Finance; Eric Pratt, Senate E-12 Policy; and Carla Nelson, Senate E-12 Finance.

First Committee Hearings Scheduled.

Education committee work will get underway next week. On Tuesday, both policy committees will hold hearings in which members introduce themselves, outline operating rules, and invite those representing various education constituencies to introduce themselves. The House Education Innovation Policy hearing is scheduled for 8:15 in Room 10 in the State Office Building and the Senate Education Policy hearing will take place at 3:00 p.m. in Room 1100 of the Senate Office Building. Also, on Thursday afternoon at 1:00 in Room 5 of SOB, the two House education committees will hold a joint hearing to hear updates on ESSA, ELA Standards, and World's Best Workforce from Education Commissioner Brenda Cassellius. I plan to attend all three hearings and welcome any of you who are interested and available to join me.