

# TICUA Policy Update

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March 13, 2015

## SARA Is On The Move

The State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement legislation unanimously passed through the Senate Finance, Ways, and Means Committee this past Tuesday and was passed by the full Senate on Thursday morning.

Also on Tuesday, the House Education Administration and Planning Committee unanimously moved the bill along to the House Finance, Ways, and Means Committee. So far, the bill has been embraced by both chambers without opposition.

## The Educator Protection Act of 2015

Governor Bill Haslam has proposed “The Education Protection Act of 2015” to create a one-time \$5 million invested pool to fund professional liability insurance for public K-12 teachers and student teachers. The insurance coverage will be provided at no cost to the teachers and will serve as supplemental coverage to what the Local Education Agencies (LEA’s) already provide. Both the House and Senate took action on the bill this week. The House passed it through the Administration and Planning Committee and the Senate Finance, Ways and Means Committee moved it unanimously to the full Senate.

## Tennessee Promise Adjustments

A number of bills are moving through the House and Senate that make adjustments to the Tennessee Promise. The Promise “clean-up” bill will define last dollar to only include the Pell Grant, TSAA, and TELS. The bill was amended to clarify that Tennessee Promise students choosing a four year institution would not be given Promise scholarship aid for any courses taken prior to being admitted to the formal Associate degree program.

Related to the Tennessee Promise, the Reconnect Grant which provides for free community college for adult learners who have been out of college for at least 24 months and earn \$36,000 or less continues to move unopposed through both chambers. This is a pilot program that, if successful, the Governor plans to expand in years to come.

Finally, the bill which allows for a delayed entry to college as a Promise student due to military commitments is moving through both chambers as well.

## Legislature Moves Changes to TELS

Education Committee Chairs Senator Dolores Gresham and Representative Harry Brooks are sponsoring a bill that will make a minor adjustment to the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship programs. This bill allows recipients of the HiSET high school equivalency credential to be eligible for a Tennessee HOPE scholarship in the same manner as recipients of the GED high school equivalency credential. The applicable minimum HiSET score for scholarship eligibility will be 15. This bill also revises the required GED score under the HOPE scholarship eligibility requirements to conform to the scale used for the new version of the GED. The new required GED score will be an average of at least 170.

Senator Mark Green and Representative John Ragan have sponsored a bill specifies that semester hours and grades earned as a part of a ROTC program will not be counted as a part of the TELS hours or GPA. This bill addresses an issue where students participating in ROTC lose TELS eligibility when majoring in STEM degrees because it quickly puts them over 120 hour or program limit. The bill has yet to be heard in the Senate but has passed the House Education Instruction and Programs Subcommittee.

## **Bill Requiring New International Student Reporting Moves Quickly in the House**

The House has passed HB670 on to the full Chamber for consideration. If passed, the bill requires campuses to report to the Tennessee Department of Safety the number of M1 and F1 visa holders on campus. The sponsors include Senator Bill Ketron and Representative Judd Matheny. Ultimately, the bill would create two reporting cycles per enrollment term. They would like to simply know the number of visa holders who begin a term and then how many complete that same term. The bill arose from a frustration in getting the same information from the federal Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS).

## **Bonding Issue Moves In Both House and Senate**

Senator Barbara Massey and Representative Harry Brooks are sponsoring a bill which will allow TICUA members to finance out-of-state projects. This expansion of bonding authority passed unanimously out of the Senate Finance, Ways, and Means Committee on Wednesday and the House Business and Utilities Committee. If passed, TICUA members will be able to use public financing bonds to expand brick and mortar operations located outside of Tennessee.

## **Firearms Bills Continue to Move**

Senator Mark Green's bill (SB1058/HB994 Rep. Todd) which expands the rights of those who possess a firearm conceal and carry permit was passed out of the Senate Commerce and Labor Committee. If passed, the provision allows employees to take civil action against an employer if they discharge or take adverse employment action against the employee for solely transporting or storing a firearm in their trunk.

The bill expands employee rights from civil protection into labor law. The bill, however, does not prohibit institutional policy against having firearms on campus nor does it trump posting signs prohibiting firearms but it does create a special class of employee related to this issue.

Upon the completion of the First Session of the 109<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, TICUA will partner with Waller LLP to provide a firearm briefing on how the various new firearm legislation impacts our campus.

## **Troutt Confirmed to State Board of Education**

The Senate Education Committee voted unanimously to approve Governor Haslam's appointment of Rhodes College President Dr. Bill Troutt to the State Board of Education. The State Board serves as the policy setting arm of the Tennessee Department of Education.

Troutt's confirmation follows the recent appointment of Dr. Candice McQueen as the Commissioner of Education. McQueen formally served as the Executive Vice President and Dean of the College of Education at Lipscomb University.

Haslam also tapped TICUA Board member Randy Boyd to serve as the Commissioner of Economic and Community Development. Haslam's selections of Boyd and McQueen were made in December 2014. Boyd continues to serve on the TICUA Board of Directors.

## **TICUA Legislative Reception Rescheduled for April**

Due to the recent winter storms, TICUA had to cancel the 59<sup>th</sup> TICUA Annual Meeting. In order to maintain the independent higher education influence with the state legislature, the TICUA Legislative Reception has been rescheduled for **5-7 pm (CDT) on April 14, 2015 in the Ballroom of the Hermitage Hotel**. At 6 pm we pause to honor both Senator Dolores Gresham and Representative Harry Brooks for their tireless support of TICUA member colleges and universities.

You may register to attend by clicking [here](#).