



Legislative Update August 10, 2020

Senate Education Committee: The Senate Education Committee met this month for what is currently its only scheduled hearing for the remainder of the legislative session. The Chair of the Committee, Senator Connie Leyva (D-Chino), opened the hearing by acknowledging that, due to the unique circumstances under which the Legislature is operating, she had asked members to significantly **pare down** their bills before the Committee to only those that addressed the most urgent needs of students, schools and universities, and which did not add additional responsibilities or costs.

This approach has caused tension between the two houses in recent weeks. With a significant number of Assembly bills pending in the Senate, multiple Assembly members have publicly expressed their frustration with what they see as the Senate using the COVID-19 pandemic to arbitrarily decide which bills will be set for hearing.

The most significant education bill heard today was AB 1835 by Assemblymember Shirley Weber (D-San Diego). The bill was introduced in response to a recent state audit report on the Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) that found local educational agencies (LEAs) were **rolling unspent supplemental and concentration funding into their general fund** at the end of the year. AB 1835 would require those unspent dollars to continue to be used to increase or improve services of unduplicated students in future years. The bill passed out of the committee unanimously and will now go to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

In total, the Committee only heard 12 bills, about **a tenth of the amount** of Assembly bills it heard in 2019.

Legislative Analyst's Office: The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) provided an update on state income and corporate tax revenues showing California's income tax withholding since the pandemic started in March is **only 1.6 percent below the comparable period in 2019**.

That drop is **far below the state's 7.3 percent decrease over the same period in 2009 and the drop in federal withholding this year of 8.6 percent**.

While this number doesn't fully provide a barometer of the state's economy, the news is far better than many expected.

Ethnic Studies Graduation Curriculum: A new draft of California's model ethnic studies curriculum is under review, 11 months after criticism of the first draft forced a rewrite. The draft will go through 8 months of review and is expected to be adopted by the State Board of Education next March. The language in the new draft is "more moderate and inclusive,". The original draft came under fire for jargony language, as well as a section of Arab American history referring to Israeli oppression of Palestinian which critics saw as one-sided.

Korean American and Indian American organizations also came forward last summer to advocate for a more diversified study of Asian Americans, The New York Times reports.

"At a time when people across the nation are calling for a fairer, more just society, we must empower and equip students and educators to have these courageous conversations in the classroom," State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond said.

The curriculum is simply a guideline for classrooms: a bill introducing an ethnic studies requirement to graduate high school was withdrawn last fall.

The draft comes less than two weeks after the California State University system (CSU) announced an ethnic studies requirement for graduation, according to the San Francisco Chronicle.