



June 12, 2014

First Legislative Council Study Committee Meeting Set -- Advocacy Efforts Kick Into Gear

The Legislative Council Study Committee on the Review of WTCS Funding and Governance will convene for its first meeting on **Thursday, July 24, 2014** (time TBA), in **Room 413 North of the State Capitol**. The meeting is open to the public, although there will not be an opportunity for public testimony. Future meetings have not been scheduled at this time.

The committee's membership, contact information, advocacy letter templates and other information are available at www.districtboards.org by clicking on the "Legislative Council Study" tab.

Wisconsin employers have begun to communicate with legislators requesting that they protect technical college local funding and governance. The heart of our advocacy campaign is for employers to describe how local technical college responsiveness helps them prosper, and how this responsiveness is a function of protecting local funding. If local technical colleges lose their remaining local funding authority, they will lose the responsiveness counted on by business and industry.

Now is the key time to request businesses communicate with their local legislators. As reflected in the website resources noted above, business partners are encouraged to write to their local legislators with copies to the Legislative Council Committee Chair Representative Nygren, Vice Chair Senator Harsdorf, and the local technical college president.

Here are some tips and reminders based on our initial campaign experience to date:

- Do not hesitate to communicate with local legislators who are leaving office in December. We will bring these letters to the successor's attention, and will benefit greatly now from creating a record with copies to the study committee leaders.
- This campaign is about protecting our remaining local funding authority, both for operations and debt/capital. Eliminating local college revenue authority with a promise to protect existing board governance is not acceptable. An entity that is

fully funded by the state is no longer a viable local government. The state will inevitably exert increased control over local college decision making by virtue of holding all of the purse strings.

- This campaign is not about the former bill, AB 177. While that bill was the precursor to the Legislative Council study, the world has significantly changed with the historic funding shift of \$406 million annually from local to state funding. This shift was accomplished without increasing taxes (as proposed by AB 177). We know that a bill like AB 177 would not likely pass next session.

The issue is whether the Legislature will support an attempt to eliminate the remainder of local funding authority and local governance. This could be attempted by an amendment to the state budget bill in Winter/Spring, 2015, rather than any new stand-alone bill. The budget bill contains thousands of provisions that ultimately come up for one up or down package vote. The Legislative Council Committee provides the singular key opportunity to assure this issue is settled as clearly as possible prior to the new session.

- We do not oppose tax reform. Tax reform is an important priority for many citizens and decisionmakers. Taxes - specifically property taxes – can be reformed without affecting technical college local funding or governance. The costs of using technical colleges to realize further property tax changes are extremely and unacceptably high: eroded responsiveness to business and industry, harm to rapid and nimble job training, slowed job growth, the loss of locally tailored access and services, and others.
- A median value Wisconsin home of \$151,000 will, on average, be assessed \$2,822 in property taxes next year. The average local technical college total levy (operations and debt) will be \$129 on this median value home. This is approximately 4.6% of total property taxes.

This report was prepared by Paul Gabriel for the Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association. Any analysis or opinion is exclusively the author's.
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