



March 1, 2012

## **Assembly Committee Vote Delayed on Bill to Disband MATC Milwaukee Board**

- *Committee Vote on AB 353 Delayed by Low Attendance and Still-Pending Amendment*
- *Advocacy Help Needed to Defeat Both Boards Bills – Time is of the Essence*

The Assembly Committee on Colleges and Universities today postponed a scheduled vote on AB 353, the bill to change district board composition. While the Assembly version was scheduled for a vote today, the committee chair, Representative Stephen Nass (R-Whitewater), reported it would be “held due to a technicality.” Today’s session of the 11-member (7 Republican and 4 Democrat) committee was attended by only 6 members, a bare quorum.

There likely were two factors behind the delay. First, there were 3 Republicans and 3 Democrats attending the session. Other bills were voted upon today but were unanimously supported or nearly so. The boards bill is more controversial. Committees generally don’t conduct votes on controversial bills when the outcome looks like it will be a tie.

Second, the committee requires any amendments be submitted to members for review 24 hours in advance of the meeting. This bill already has a “substitute” amendment pending that was submitted in time. It replaces the original bill (affecting all district boards) with a substitute (that disbands and replaces only the MATC Milwaukee Board). In last week’s Senate committee action, an amendment to the substitute amendment was also adopted and passed. No such amendment to the amendment has yet been submitted in the Assembly process. Had the vote taken place today, it would have necessarily been on some bill version that is different than the Senate’s current bill version.

As the session heads toward adjournment, each passing day results in more difficulty passing a bill in identical fashion in both houses. The delay today was positive as we seek to “run out the clock” on these bills before passage. However, the delay was also negative. It also allows the Assembly committee to meet again soon (as early as next Tuesday) to consider a version that is identical to the Senate.

We need significant advocacy assistance as soon as possible.

In the Senate, we need to ask members of the Senate Republican majority to oppose the bill there, SB 275, and to request that leadership not schedule it for a floor vote. Please also contact Senate Democrats and ask them to speak out in opposition if the bill is scheduled to the floor. A previous report detailing the Senate bill's consequences and why we oppose it is linked [here](#). You may share it as you wish.

In the Assembly, we still have up to a few days to influence majority Republican members of the Assembly Colleges and Universities Committee. We understand that 2 or 3 of these members do have reservations about the bill. If the vote were taken now with all present, however, it would likely pass the committee. The 7 Republican members of College and Universities voting as early as next Tuesday are:

Stephen Nass, Chair (R-Whitewater) – Blackhawk  
Joan Ballweg (R-Markesan) – Moraine Park and Fox Valley  
Paul Farrow (R-Pewaukee) – Waukesha County  
Dan Knodl (R-Germantown) – Waukesha County  
Dean Knudson (R-Hudson) – Chippewa Valley and Wisconsin Indianhead  
Don Pridemore (R-Hartford) – Moraine Park and Waukesha County  
Evan Wynn (R-Whitewater) – Blackhawk

These members should be asked to oppose the bill as amended in committee (and as will be further amended by the forthcoming additional amendment, AA1 to ASA1 to AB 353). The same arguments in the linked report above apply to the Assembly. Be sure to convey that no board or college supports attacking MATC Milwaukee or any other among us.

The minority Democrat members serving on Assembly Colleges and Universities can be thanked for opposing the bill. They are:

Barbara Toles (D-Milwaukee)  
Terese Berceau (D-Madison)  
Louis Molepske (D-Stevens Point)  
Mark Pocan (D-Madison)

Either bill may pass both houses if people who have reservations within the majority of each house simply do nothing and fail to take affirmative steps to speak out in concern and opposition. A group of Milwaukee community leaders spoke out yesterday including religious leaders through MICA, representing Milwaukee's inner-city congregations, and several county board supervisors. We now need to ask legislators statewide to do the right thing and not pass either bill.

This is a set of bad bills representing an attack on our largest college's board that will have statewide consequences. One of the precedents that will be set is that the Legislature knows better than either our local appointing authorities or our representative local community board members as to how technical colleges should be governed and who should be allowed to serve on the board. Another precedent will be set that a local special interest group can successfully insist the Legislature completely disband and re-cast a local government authority with which that group does not agree.

It may not be long before such take-overs spread to other boards, regardless of which party controls state government. If you believe in local control, our 100-year history of local board governance, and in members being appointed, removed and replaced locally in the district, we need you to oppose these bills as vigorously as possible.

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