



2015 - 2016 Bills of Interest to Wisconsin Technical Colleges

As of December 22, 2015

Bills or proposed bills of interest to technical colleges in the 2015 - 2016 legislative session are described below. This document evolves with the addition of new bills and updates to existing bills throughout the session.

- New and updated bills are highlighted.
- The District Boards Association's position or recommended position, if any, is provided at the end of each bill description.
- An index organized by bill subject begins on the next page.
- Each bill's complete text, sponsors, procedu

ral history and status can be found at: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/>. Enter the bill number (e.g., "AB 22") under "Find a Proposal."

- A summary guide to understanding a bill's procedural history/status online follows at the conclusion of this report.

The District Boards Association's lobbying efforts and positions are available at the Government Accountability Board (GAB) "Eye on Lobbying" website:

<https://lobbying.wi.gov/Home/Welcome?session=2015REG>. This site includes cross-referenced links to other organizations taking a lobbying interest on each bill.

The current legislative session officially runs from January 2015, through December 2016, but effectively ends with the adjournment of both houses. Adjournment may occur by late Winter or early Spring, 2016.

Readers are welcome to contact Layla Merrifield at the District Boards Association office for more information: (608) 266-9430 or lmerrifield@districtboards.org.

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Bills of Interest

AB 20 – Requiring that Local Government Contracts Include the Use of U.S. Made Products

AB 20 was introduced in February 2015, and is awaiting a hearing.

Like other local governments, technical college districts follow a number of rules for contracting involving facility construction or repair. This bill would require that any contract entered into by a local government, including a technical college district, contain a provision that the contractor will use materials that are manufactured in the United States.

There is no strong reason to support or oppose this bill.

Recommended position: None/monitor.

Updated 2015 Act 55 (AB 21/SB 21) – The 2015 – 2017 State Budget Act

AB 21 and SB 21 were introduced at the Governor’s request in February 2015. They were referred to the Joint Finance Committee (JFC), which held agency briefings in early March. The JFC conducted 4 public hearings between March 18 and March 26. The JFC has begun “executive action,” voting to adjust the bills through hundreds of individual motions topic-by-topic over several weeks from mid-April through May. After executive action, the JFC budget bill version is sent to each house. Each house may further amend the bill and must reconcile any late changes with the other house. Once both houses pass identical versions of the budget, it goes to the Governor for line-item vetoes and signing. The state budget establishes state appropriations and state programs for the two-year period from July 1, 2015, through June 30, 2017. 2015 Act 55 was signed, with partial vetoes, by the Governor on July 12, 2015.

For the latest budget bill updates and details, see: www.districtboards.org and click on “Legislative Updates.”

Updated AB 30/SB 17 – Providers of Continuing Education to Chiropractic Technicians and Chiropractic Radiologic Technicians

These twin bills were introduced in February 2015, and are awaiting committee hearings.

These twin bills change the procedure for approving the provision of continuing education to licensed chiropractors, chiropractic technicians (CTs) and chiropractic radiologic technicians (CRTs). Moraine Park Technical College offers four programs for students who then may become licensed CTs and CRTs. These bills affect MPTC's ability to provide continuing education to those licensed individuals. MPTC's ability to train these individuals and provide them continuing education was seriously undermined by 2009 budget bill provisions described below.

Currently, MPTC graduates who become licensed CTs and CRTs may not acquire continuing education from their *alma mater* unless the MPTC instruction is "sponsored" by a "program sponsor." By law, program sponsors are limited to: the Wisconsin Chiropractic Association (WCA), International Chiropractors Association, an approved college of chiropractic that trains doctors of chiropractic, or an accredited college of medicine or osteopathy.

These bills would add to the list of continuing education program sponsors the Chiropractic Society of Wisconsin and the American Chiropractic Association.

The 2009-11 state budget act contained provisions requested by the Wisconsin Chiropractic Association (WCA). The amendment eliminated MPTC's authority to provide CTs and CRTs continuing education. The law required that MPTC could only offer continuing education to the extent it was sponsored (for a fee) by the WCA or others as described above. These and other controversial licensing changes helped lead some members of the chiropractic community to create a new trade group, the Chiropractic Society of Wisconsin, as an alternative to the WCA.

On November 17, Senator Petrowski introduced Senate Amendment 1 to SB 17, to permit Herzing University and any technical college to be "program sponsors" of continuing education for chiropractic technicians and chiropractic radiological technicians.

Recommended position: Support, as amended by SA 1 to SB 17.

Updated AB 32/SB 49 – Eliminating Prevailing Wage Laws for Public Projects

These identical bills were introduced in February 2015. In lieu of AB 32/SB 49, a partial repeal of state prevailing wage laws was included by the Senate as a late amendment to the 2015-17 biennial budget bill. See: DBA Legislative Update dated July 13, 2015.

Updated – 2015 Act 28 (AB 56/SB 59) – Requiring the UW System to Report on the High School of Students Requiring Remedial Instruction

The Assembly version, AB 56, went to the full Assembly on March 17, 2015, where it was amended and passed on a voice vote. It was concurred in by the Senate on April 21 and approved by the Governor on July 1, 2015.

As amended, AB 56 requires the UW System to report annually on any high school from which 6 or more students who graduated in the prior year and immediately enrolled at the UW needed to take remedial English or math upon entering the UW. The UW would report to the Legislature and State Superintendent of Public Instruction. The State Superintendent would be required to share this information with school districts.

Act 28 does not directly affect technical colleges.

AB 63/SB 33 – Eligibility for Broadband Expansion Grant Program

These twin bills were introduced in February 2015, and are awaiting a hearing.

The 2013-15 state budget bill created a broadband expansion grant program. The program provides that the Public Service Commission (PSC) make up to \$500,000 in grants annually to expand broadband infrastructure in areas of the state served by less than two internet providers or that the PSC deems are underserved by broadband services. “Broadband” is the common name for large and high-speed capability to transmit communications and Internet data. Under current law, grants may be awarded to: an “organization,” a telecommunications utility, or to a city, village, county or town that applies in partnership with an organization or utility.

These bills expand eligible applicants for grants to include technical college districts, school districts and/or public libraries that apply in partnership with an organization or telecommunications utility that is also an eligible applicant.

These bills would expand grant eligibility to important public community “hubs” – schools, libraries and technical colleges. Areas most in need of greater broadband access likely have large numbers of individuals dependent on these community hubs for their Internet access.

Recommended position: Support.

Updated – AB 64/SB 91 – Technical College Authority to Operate Occupational and STEM Charter Schools

The Assembly bill was introduced in February 2015, and received a public hearing on March 10. The Senate companion bill was introduced in early April. No action has been taken on that version. Instead, similar provisions were included in Act 55, the biennial budget bill, authorizing the Gateway Technical College District Board to authorize charter high schools within the district, focused on science, technology, engineering,

and mathematics, or occupational education and training. See: DBA Legislative Update dated July 13, 2015.

AB 86/SB 163 – Workforce Growth Grants for Technical Colleges

These bills were introduced in March in the Assembly and in May, 2015, in the Senate, by 23 Assembly Democrats and 5 Senate Democrats. They are a combination of prior bills (Workforce Growth Grants bills were introduced but not passed in the 2011 and 2013 sessions) plus several of the WTCS's 2015-2017 state budget requests made by the WTCS Board but not included in the Governor's executive budget bill. The equivalent of these bills was also the subject of a state budget bill motion in the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) on April 17, 2015, but failed on a 4-12 party-line vote.

First, AB 86 and SB 163 would appropriate \$20 million annually to the WTCS Board for new technical college "Workforce Growth Grants" distributed to districts on a competitive basis by the WTCS for projects in which:

- ¥ The college partners with a business, consortium of businesses, an economic development organization or a local workforce development board;
- ¥ To meet local needs supporting sectors with a "documented skills gap" or high workforce shortage, including manufacturing, energy, informational technology, skilled trades and healthcare;
- ¥ For activities that address development of individuals prior to entering the workforce or for workforce training; for any of the following:
 - "Job training scholarships" based on local labor market needs;
 - Building or infrastructure construction;
 - Equipment and material purchases;
 - Faculty hiring;
 - Development of certain industry-driven curricula; and
 - Student career support services including job placement and business recruitment.

Second, the bills would provide \$9 million over the next 2 years to implement three programs requested by the WTCS Board as part of its 2015 – 2017 state budget request. These requests were not put forward in the budget bills, AB 21 and SB 21, as introduced by the Governor. They are:

- Dual enrollment opportunity grants (\$3 million in 2016-17);
- Innovation grants to foster entrepreneurship (\$500,000 annually); and
- Veterans success grants (\$2.5 million annually for 2 years with project costs to be expended by June 30, 2019).

These bills are very positive in that Workforce Growth Grants would provide new capacity targeted to filling existing or emerging high skill jobs. The nature of Workforce Growth Grants would be competitive, but ongoing and stable as a new investment.

The bills also fund priorities identified by the WTCS Board in its budget request developed with input from the college presidents, district boards, faculty, and students.

Recommended position: Support.

Updated AB 87/SB 232 – Use of Wisconsin Products and Services in State and Local Government Purchasing

These bills were introduced in February and August 2015, and are awaiting public hearings.

This bill requires state purchasing and encourages, but does not require, local government purchasing of Wisconsin-sourced goods and services. The state would be required to purchase at least 20% of the value of products and services locally. For local governments, including technical college districts, the new law would state in part: “It shall be a goal of a local government unit that, annually, at least 20 percent of the aggregate value of purchases of products and services by that local government unit shall be local.” The bill further requires the local government unit to evaluate its performance on the 20% purchasing goal, but allows any government unit to opt out of evaluating its own performance simply by passing a resolution.

It is not clear whether local government units generally, and technical colleges specifically, already exceed 20% standard. Given that the product and services would count if purchased through a Wisconsin business regardless of where they were manufactured, it seems likely this standard is already greatly exceeded. Of course, local government units already have a natural interest in “buying locally” without codifying good practice and common sense into a new state law.

Recommended position: None/monitor.

AB 103/SB 112 – Entrepreneurial Assistance (Internship and College) Grants

These twin bills were introduced in March and April 2015, by 35 Assembly and Senate Democrats led by Assembly Minority Leader Peter Barca (D-Kenosha) and Senator Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point). They are awaiting hearings in their respective houses.

These bills would authorize the Wisconsin Economic Development Corporation (WEDC) to award grants to new Wisconsin businesses and to colleges and universities, including technical colleges, in support of certain paid student internships. New businesses would be eligible for a grant of up to \$3,000 for providing an enrolled student (of a technical college, UW institution or private, non-profit, college/university) a paid internship in the following fields: business, engineering, information technology, or a related field. A “new” business is defined as one that applies for a grant within the first 5 years it has been organized in the state.

Once three or more businesses receive grants for interns from one qualifying college or university, and the college or university creates a program to support internships funded by the grants, the college may also apply for a grant of up to \$25,000. The bills require that WEDC award at least \$125,000 annually for this program statewide. Finally, the bills require the WEDC to actively pursue private donations to support the grants program.

Recommended position: Support.

AB 108 – Requiring Local Governments to Create a Civil Service System

This bill was introduced in late March 2015, by 18 Assembly Democrats and is co-sponsored by a 6 Senate Democrats. It is awaiting a public hearing.

Under current law, local governments may either create a civil service system for most employees or must have in place a grievance system (conveyed through an employee handbook) that addresses workplace safety, employee termination and employee discipline. AB 108 would instead mandate that all local governments, including technical college districts, establish a civil service system by January 1, 2017. The civil service system must grant to each employee with “permanent status,” as defined in that system, the right to a “just cause” standard for employee removal, suspension without pay, discharge, reduction in base pay, demotion, and non-renewal.

Recommended position: None/monitor.

AB 182 – Granting Veterans Credit for Prior Learning

This bill is one of several introduced in late April 2015, as part of a veterans’ package. Each is co-sponsored by a number of legislators led by Representatives Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton) and Jeremy Thiesfeldt (R-Fond du Lac). This bill is awaiting a public hearing.

AB 182 requires technical college district boards and the UW Board of Regents to create policies requiring that their respective institutions grant academic credit to a student who is a current or former member of the U.S. armed forces, or a reserve unit of the armed forces, for any course that was part of the individual’s military training or service experience if the individual demonstrates that the course:

- meets the standards of the American Council of Education or equivalent standards for awarding credit; and
- is similar in subject matter to a course offered by the technical college or UW institution.

Recommended position: None/monitor, pending additional study concerning feasibility and costs.

AB 183 – Creating a Taskforce on Issues Service Members Face Returning from War

This bill is one of several introduced in late April 2015, as part of a veterans' package. Each is co-sponsored by a number of legislators led by Representatives Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton) and including Jeremy Thiesfeldt (R-Fond du Lac). This bill is awaiting a public hearing.

This bill would require the adjutant general of the Department of Military Affairs to create a taskforce studying issues of concern to service members returning home from overseas deployments in combat zones and hazardous duty zones. The taskforce would issue a report within 6 months of its first meeting with findings and recommendations to the Legislature and Governor. It would exist temporarily (until 30 days after issuing its report) and then disband.

The taskforce would include 11 members: the adjutant general or designee, the secretary of the Department of Veterans Affairs or designee, the president of the Wisconsin Technical College System or designee, the president of the UW System or designee, the DWD secretary or designee, the Department of Health Services secretary or designee, and 5 public members (at least 3 of which have experience in post-deployment issues ranging from post-traumatic stress disorder to veteran homelessness, family readjustment, etc.).

Recommended position: Support.

Updated - Act 21 (AB 235/SB 164) – Resident Tuition and Fees for Non-Resident Veteran Students

These bills were introduced in May, 2015. Each measure was co-sponsored by a number of legislators led in the Assembly by Representatives Ken Skowronski (R-Franklin) and Dianne Hesselbein (D-Middleton). The Senate companion also has bipartisan support and was introduced by Senator Jerry Petrowski (R-Marathon) and Tim Carpenter (D-Milwaukee).

Current law provides for special tuition rules for veterans attending technical colleges and the UW System. Generally, non-resident students attending technical colleges are charged 150% of resident tuition. Generally, veterans and their family members already qualify as state residents. Also, many veterans and certain veterans' family members receive a full waiver of tuition and fees.

These bills apply to the UW System and technical colleges. For technical colleges, they require districts to charge resident tuition (rather than non-resident tuition) to the extent tuition is assessed at all for the following individuals:

- any veteran living in Wisconsin regardless of whether the veteran is considered a resident if the veteran has served at least 90 days of active duty within the 3 years prior to enrollment; and
- the eligible veteran's spouse or child who lives in the state (if they qualify for federal veterans benefits by virtue of the relationship to the veteran).

The bills also establish that the date of enrollment for the 3-year enrollment window is the date the college receives the student's tuition deposit.

After a qualifying veteran, spouse or child enrolls under this bill, the college must charge resident tuition and fees so long as the individual is continuously enrolled.

Senate Amendment 1 clarified that an individual enrolled in a technical college who has been charged resident fees under the bill's provisions on the date that begins the third year after the qualifying veteran was discharged shall continue to be charged resident fees for as long as the individual maintains continuous enrollment at the college.

SB 164 as amended by SA 1 was passed by the Senate June 9 and immediately messaged and passed by the Assembly the same day. The bill was signed by the Governor and enrolled as 2015 Act 21 on June 18, 2015.

SB 50 (also AB 131), SB 51 (also AB 132), SB 52 (also AB 133), SB 53 (also AB 134), SB 54 (also AB 135), SB 55 (also AB 136), and SB 56 (also AB 137) – Tax Incremental Finance (TIF) Reform Package

These 7 sets of twin bills would reform the state's highly technical tax incremental finance (TIF) laws. All 14 bills were introduced by the Legislative Council Study Committee on Tax Incremental Financing in February 2015. Legislative Council study committees are joint legislator-citizen panels that study an issue area in depth. Study Committees may then directly introduce bills as a committee to propose policy changes in the topic area.

TIF districts are created by municipalities (cities, villages and, in some cases, towns and counties). They allow for development of certain property and fund public-side development costs by channeling property taxes to pay off these investments during the TIF's life instead of distributing them to local taxing authorities including technical colleges.

The creation and operation of TIF districts affects technical colleges in several ways, and a member of the local technical college district board serves by statute as a member of the TIF district's Joint Review Board (JRB) overseeing each TIF district. TIF districts support redevelopment of a blighted or underused portion of land, which can

affect the need for skilled workers. Because TIF districts do not generate local property taxes during the TIF's life, they take the affected land off the tax base for the TIF district's life. This reduces the taxable base of property for local taxing authorities, including technical college districts. Upon a TIF district's closure, the tax base is typically higher than prior to the TIF district's creation.

Updated - SB 50/AB 131 – Among other changes, these bills extend the Joint Review Board's (JRB's) maximum review period from 30 to 45 days to approve municipal resolutions related to a new or existing TIF. The Senate bill received a public hearing in April 2015. It was voted out of committee on a 5-0 recommendation for passage and was passed by the full Senate 33-0 on May 6. The Assembly version received a public hearing in October 2015 and was recommended for passage 12-0. It is awaiting action by the full Assembly. *Recommended position: None/monitor.*

Updated - SB 51/AB 132 – Among other changes, these bills provide that JRBs must be in place for the life of a TIF district (they currently may be temporary). The Senate bill version received a public hearing in late April 2015. It was voted out of committee on a 5-0 recommendation for passage and was passed by the full Senate 33-0 on May 6. The Assembly bill received a public hearing in October 2015 and was recommended for passage 12-0. It is awaiting action by the full Assembly. *Recommended position: None/monitor.*

Updated - SB 52/AB 133 – Among other changes, these bills affect the allowable boundaries of "donor" TIFs and other TIFs receiving funds generated by donor TIFs. The Senate bill version received a public hearing in late April 2015. It was voted out of committee on a 5-0 recommendation for passage and was passed by the full Senate 33-0 on May 6. The Assembly version received a hearing in October and was recommended for passage 10-2. It is awaiting action by the full Assembly. *Recommended position: None/monitor.*

Updated - SB 53/AB 134 – TIF districts have a maximum lifespan varying from 20 to 27 years, and may or may not be extended, depending on when the TIF district was first created. Among other changes, these bills allow the creating entity to change the TIF project plan and/or extend the TIF by an additional 5 years if the amount of tax increments is negatively affected (annually or overall) by any of the following impacts: a further amendment to TIF laws; a change by the Department of Revenue to equalized valuation methods; or, a reduction in the \$406 million annually in special state aid to technical colleges that "buys down" local college levies under 2013 Act 145. The Senate bill version received a public hearing in late April 2015, with Substitute Amendment 1 adopted on the floor by voice vote and then passed as amended 31-0. Senate Substitute Amendment 1 permits a TIF project plan to be amended, or its maximum lifespan to be extended by an additional three years, rather than five years. The Assembly version is awaiting a hearing. *Recommended position: None/monitor.*

Updated - SB 54/AB 135 – Among other changes, these bills remove the restriction that property standing vacant for 7 or more years before a TIF is created may not comprise more than 25 percent of the TIF area. They also revise the calculation of the TIF’s initial tax incremental base to exclude all tax-exempt city-owned property. The Senate bill version received a public hearing in late April 2015. It was voted out of committee on a 5-0 recommendation for passage and is awaiting action by the full Senate. The Assembly version received a hearing in October 2015, and was recommended for passage, 11-0. It is awaiting action by the full Assembly.
Recommended position: None/monitor.

Updated - SB 55/AB 136 – Current law generally requires that a new TIF’s initial value plus the total value of all existing TIF districts not exceed 12% of the municipality’s total equalized value. Among other changes, these bills generally increase the limit to 15%. The Senate bill version received a public hearing in late April 2015, and was recommended for passage by a vote of 4-0 at an executive session in late May. The Assembly version received a hearing in October, and was recommended for passage by a vote of 10-2. Both bills are awaiting further action by their respective houses.
Recommended position: None/monitor.

Updated - SB 56/AB 137 – Current law allows the municipality that created a TIF district to declare it distressed or severely distressed under certain circumstances. Doing so can extend the TIF’s life from 10 to 40 years. Under current law, these provisions of state statutes “sunset” on October 1, 2015. Among other changes, these bills extend the sunset to October 1, 2020. The Senate bill version received a public hearing in late April 2015, and voted out of committee on a 5-0 recommendation for passage. The bill was passed by the full Senate, 31-0, during the September floor session. The Assembly version is still awaiting a committee hearing. *Recommended position: None/monitor.*

Updated 2015 Act 79 (SB 137) – Publication of Legal Notices on the Internet

This bill was introduced in late April by a bipartisan group of legislators in both houses. It was passed by both houses and published as 2015 Act 79 on November 12, 2015.

Required legal notices by local governments (including technical college districts) are typically published in a newspaper likely to give notice in the affected area and to persons likely to be affected by the proposed action. Such notices may also be posted (rather than published) in three public places likely to give notice to affected persons. The publication and posting requirements are also subject to timing requirements.

This bill allows a local government to post a notice in one public place likely to give notice to affected persons (instead of three public places) if the local government also posts the notice on its web site.

New – AB 481/SB 355 – School Borrowing and Referenda

These companion bills were introduced in late October and early November, and are awaiting public hearings in their respective houses.

These bills change the schedule on which a school district can place a referendum on the ballot. Currently, a school referendum can coincide with a primary election, general election, or a special election can be called specifically for the referendum. Under the bills, a school district referendum would have to coincide with a regularly scheduled Spring or Fall general election. The bills also require that a school district wait a period of time before resubmitting a referendum request following a failed referendum. Currently, there is no limitation on whether, and how frequently, a referendum may be placed before voters. These bills would prevent a school board from bringing a new referendum request for two years after a referendum is rejected by a majority of district voters. As originally drafted, the bills do not affect technical college borrowing or referenda.

Recommended position: None/monitor.

New – AB 272/SB 194 -- Student Loans

These companion bills were introduced in June by the entire Senate Democratic caucus and 35 Assembly Democrats. The Senate version received a public hearing in October, while the Assembly version is awaiting a hearing.

This bill creates an authority, which is a public body corporate and politic, to be known as the Wisconsin Student Loan Refinancing Authority (WSLRA). Under the bill, the board must develop and implement a loan program under which state residents may refinance student loans. The bill also requires an institution or college campus within the University of Wisconsin (UW) System, a technical college, a tribally controlled college, or a private, nonprofit institution of higher education to provide to a prospective or newly accepted student and to the student's parents clearly outlined and easy-to-understand information on: (a) the total cost of attendance at the institution of higher education; (b) the approximate or, if known, the actual amount of financial aid that the student would receive from the institution of higher education, and the approximate or, if known, the actual total amount of student loan debt that the student would accumulate over the course of four years, if the student were to attend the institution of higher education for four years (student loan debt); and student loan rates, repayment plans, default rates, and the actual monthly payment that would be required to pay that student loan debt when the loan becomes due. While the Legislature appears unlikely to create a state-run loan refinancing authority, student debt and the cost of higher education is an ongoing state and national concern.

Recommended position: None/monitor.

New – AB 480/SB 363 – Firearms on Campuses

These companion bills were introduced in late October in the Senate, and in early November in the Assembly, and are awaiting public hearings.

Under current law, institutions of the UW System and the technical college system are permitted to prohibit a person from carrying a firearm in any building on its grounds. These bills would remove that option to prohibit carrying a firearm into a building, if the person holds a license to carry a concealed weapon. Private colleges and universities would continue to have the option to post their facilities.

Recommended position: Oppose.

New -- AB 534/SB 407 -- Biennial Budget Requests

These companion bills were introduced in late November and early December, and are scheduled for public hearings in the Assembly on December 16 and in the Senate on December 17.

Under current law, no later than September 15 of each even-numbered year, each executive state agency must file with the Department of Administration the agency's budget request for the succeeding biennium. This bill requires each agency to include with its biennial budget request, and to submit to the governor and the legislature, all of the following: (a) a proposal to reduce the agency's budget for the succeeding fiscal biennium by a total of 5% of the agency's budget for the current fiscal biennium; and (b) a proposal to maintain the agency's current budget levels for the succeeding fiscal biennium.

The Administration's "biennial budget instructions" for agencies regularly include requests for plans for reducing agency budgets or otherwise streamlining their operations. The Governor makes recommendations to reduce or increase agency budgets as part of his or her Executive Budget Bill. Those budget recommendations are then extensively analyzed and summarized by the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, and then modified by the Joint Finance Committee and the full Legislature, before being sent back to the Governor for further modification via partial vetoes. All Legislators and citizens currently have access to the analysis and summaries provided by the Fiscal Bureau, and any legislator can request additional information of the Fiscal Bureau regarding specific programs or areas of concern.

AB 534/SB 407 would simply increase agency administrative workload and costs, in order to produce three separate agency budget requests, rather than one as under current law. In any case, agency-prepared plans outlining zero increase and 5% budget decreases would not be binding on the Governor or Legislature during their budget deliberations.

Recommended position: Oppose.

New – AB 541/SB 419 – DVA Veterans Employment and Entrepreneurship Grants

These companion bills were introduced in late November 2015. The bill received an initial public hearing in the Assembly on December 10. The Senate version has not yet been scheduled for a hearing.

Under current law, the Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) may grant certain amounts to employers for each veteran or disabled veteran the employers hire, subject to specific limitations. This bill eliminates that grant program. Instead, the bill creates a program under which DVA may, beginning in the 2016-17 fiscal year, make up to \$500,000 in grants each year to veterans, employers, and nonprofit organizations to improve employment outcomes for veterans in this state. Specifically, the bill authorizes DVA to award grants to assist veteran entrepreneurs, to give employers in this state incentives to hire veterans, especially disabled veterans, to help fund employment training for veterans, especially disabled veterans, and for other programs or purposes as determined by DVA.

Recommended position: Support.

New -- AB 542/SB 418 – DVA Veterans Nonprofit Grant Program

These companion bills were introduced in late November 2015 in the Assembly and in early December in the Senate. The bill received an initial public hearing in the Assembly on December 10. The Senate version was introduced in early December, but has not yet been scheduled for a hearing.

Last session, the Legislature passed 2013 Act 190, which created a new program in the Wisconsin Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA) that offered grant funding to nonprofit organizations that serve veterans and their families. The bill authorized WDVA to provide up to \$250,000 in grants, with a maximum limit of \$25,000 per grant recipient. Rather than using general purpose revenue, that bill relied upon funding from the existing VetEd appropriation at WDVA, which provides supplemental reimbursement for higher education tuition and fees. Only a portion of those VetEd funds are used each year, as colleges and universities are required to remit tuition to Post-9/11 veterans and certain dependents. The bill helped ensure that these underutilized funds would actually be used to provide support to veterans.

A sunset was applied to the new program and DVA was given the authority to audit grant recipients, in order to ensure that the money was being used effectively. Over 20 organizations received funding through the program, including groups addressing veteran homelessness, job assistance, treatment courts, and PTSD, among many others. Among those organizations was the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, in order to serve the “non-traditional” veteran students enrolled at that institution. AB 542 re-

creates that grant program for nonprofit organizations serving veterans using existing, underutilized funds in the VetEd appropriation in the amount of \$250,000, with a maximum limit of \$25,000 per grant recipient in each biennium. Given UW-Milwaukee's success in pursuing a grant, it appears that technical colleges would likewise be eligible to pursue funds for veteran student services in the next round, should the legislation be successful.

Recommended position: Support.

New – AB 546/SB 416 – Student Loan Forgiveness for Rural Counties

These companion bills were authored by Senator Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point) and Representative Warren Petryk (R-Eleva) and were introduced in late November. The bills grew out of a proposal from the Council on Workforce Investment and are aimed at addressing the state's skilled and educated worker shortage, particularly acute in rural and declining-population areas, and set to worsen with Baby Boomer generation retirements. The bills are being co-sponsored by a bipartisan coalition of lawmakers in both houses.

This bill creates the Growing Rural Opportunities and Workforce in Wisconsin Program (GROW Wisconsin program), administered by the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB), that provides student loan reimbursement payments to individuals who relocate to certain rural counties. Under the program, an individual with an outstanding balance on a student loan may apply to HEAB for student loan reimbursement payments if (1) the individual obtained a degree, or an embedded pathway certificate or technical diploma, prior to establishing residency in a rural opportunity community and prior to applying to HEAB; and (2) the individual establishes residency in a rural opportunity community after the applicable county board adopts a resolution to participate in the GROW Wisconsin program (authorizing resolution).

The authorizing resolution must include an irrevocable commitment by the county to participate in the program for at least five years and must specify the maximum total of all payments by the county toward the outstanding balance of an individual's student loan, which payments may not exceed the lesser of \$7,500 or 10 percent of the outstanding balance of the student loan. A "rural opportunity community" is a county that has adopted an authorizing resolution and that is certified by the Secretary of Workforce Development as an eligible rural county based on certain criteria. Under the GROW Wisconsin program, HEAB makes annual student loan payments to an individual's lender in the amount of 10 percent of the outstanding balance of the individual's student loan, but not exceeding a total of \$7,500 or the maximum amount of payment authorized by the rural opportunity community. The rural opportunity community, under the authorizing resolution, also makes payments toward the outstanding balance of the individual's student loan, and HEAB's payments may not exceed the amount of the payments by the rural opportunity community. HEAB may not make payments under the program for an individual for more than five years and must cease

payments if the individual relocates outside the rural opportunity community. If the amount appropriated for HEAB's payments is insufficient, HEAB must prorate its payments.

Also under the bill, a county that is not a rural opportunity community (a non-ROC) may create a program that is similar to the program created under the bill, except that the board of such a county may set the maximum annual and total payments at whatever amount it considers appropriate. An individual who is eligible for a reimbursement payment from a program established by a non-ROC is not eligible to receive a state matching grant under the state program. In addition, a non-ROC may partner with any city, village, or town that is located wholly or partly within the county, or with any other person, to help the non-ROC fund the county program. Rural counties that would be eligible to participate in the GROW program would be defined based on federal designations as (a) not including any urbanized area (47 of Wisconsin's 72 counties); (b) less than 25% of persons residing in the county are employed in another county that includes an urbanized area; and (c) less than 25% of persons employed in the county reside in another county that includes an urbanized area.

Recommended position: Support, pending additional information on overall costs.

New -- AB 581/SB 449 – Licenses to Teach Vocational Education Subjects

These companion bills were introduced in early December, and expand upon changes in teacher licensing passed for certain technical education subjects under the biennial budget act. They are awaiting public hearings.

These bills expand the experience-based method to obtain a license to teach a technical education subject, created in [2015 Wisconsin Act 55](#), to include licenses to teach vocational education subjects. Under the bill, vocational education subjects include agriculture, child services, clothing services, food services, housing and equipment services, family and consumer education, family and consumer services, home economics-related occupations, health care-related occupations, business education, and marketing education. This bill does not affect other processes by which an individual may obtain a license to teach a vocational education subject under current law.

The bill is intended to increase the number of technical and vocational education teachers in Wisconsin school districts, which we certainly support. Unfortunately, new and increasingly rigid HLC guidelines for faculty qualifications could make dual enrollment opportunities more difficult to provide, as teacher certification grows more flexible.

Recommended position: None/monitor.

New – SB 396 – Waiver of UW and Technical College Application Fees

This bill was introduced in late November by Senator Taylor (D-Milwaukee) and is awaiting a public hearing.

This bill requires University of Wisconsin System (UWS) institutions and technical colleges to waive application fees for state residents who are high school juniors or seniors and who apply during the second full week of October. The bill appropriates general purpose revenues to reimburse UWS institutions and technical colleges for the fees that are waived.

Recommended position: Support.

New – LRB-1176 – Tuition-Free Enrollment Program

This bill draft is being circulated for co-sponsorship by Representative Cory Mason (D-Racine). It has not yet been introduced.

This bill, nicknamed the “Wisconsin Technical College Promise Act,” would be intended to work in conjunction with President Obama's "American College Promise" proposal to help provide two years of free college tuition to students who are working towards a vocational diploma, a 4-year college transfer program, or an associate's degree program. The federal “College Promise” proposes a cost-sharing model, in which the federal government would provide funding for a portion of the foregone tuition, and state governments would be asked to fund the remaining amount. The state legislation would appropriate state funds for technical college students enrolled in the federal America’s College Promise program, in order to fund the fee remission for the portion of student fees not directly covered by the federal program. Congress has not taken action on President Obama’s proposal, but a primary concern with that legislation would be the lack of available funds for the state’s portion of student tuition remissions, and the implications for technical college budgets in the absence of those funds.

Recommended position: None/monitor.

LRB 1183/1 – Eliminating Personal Property Taxes

This draft bill is being circulated by Senator Tom Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) and Representative Bob Kulp (R-Stratford). It has not yet been introduced.

This draft bill would eliminate Wisconsin’s personal property tax effective beginning in 2020. These are taxes imposed on taxable “personal” property such as business equipment, not “real” property such as land and buildings. Various types of formerly taxed personal property already have been exempted over the years including computer equipment and machinery used for manufacturing. Almost all personal property tax is assessed on commercial and manufacturing property.

Local governments currently assess approximately \$270.5 million annually in personal property taxes; about \$200 million from commercial property, \$65 million from manufacturing property, and \$5 from agricultural and other personal property.

When business computer equipment was exempted from personal property taxation, the state provided aid to local taxing authorities, including technical college districts, to replace some of the lost local revenue. Of \$88 million provided in 2013, approximately \$5.1 million was distributed to technical colleges. This bill would eliminate those aid payments beginning in 2016.

This will reduce state funding to technical colleges by roughly \$2.5 million annually. While the aid amount was \$5.1 million in 2013, the shift of \$406 million annually from local to state technical college funding will itself greatly reduce state exempt computer aid beginning this year. The actual amount is subject to a complex set of calculations. Based on a very rough estimate (a 51% decrease in total levies) the loss of remaining exempt computer aid would be approximately \$2.5 million annually beginning in 2016.

This bill would also shift property tax burdens to residential property and away from commercial and manufacturing property as of 2020.

Technical colleges may levy the same amount of tax dollars this year as in the prior year (with an adjustment for a “net new construction” growth factor and for authorized debt). Under this bill, a district levying the same dollar amount would generate more of those dollars from the district’s residential property to make up generating less from commercial, manufacturing and agricultural personal property. Residential taxpayer would see an increase due to the shift without any increase in local tax levy.

All property owners are sensitive to property tax trends. The amount a property owner pays is not only based on tax rates and changes in property value, but also on the share of total taxes paid by specific types of property. Some residential property tax sensitivity is likely due to the fact that residential property already carries a significantly larger share of total property taxes relative to other property than in the past. This bill would further shift this burden.

The share of total property taxes paid by property type in 1970(71) and 2013(14) is presented below. The final column reflects the Boards Association’s informal calculation of this bill’s impact *if the bill had already passed and been implemented* for 2013(14) tax bills:

<u>Property Type</u>	<u>1970(71)</u>	<u>2013(14)</u>	<u>2013(14) w/out personal prop. tax</u>
Residential	50.6	68.2	71.1
Commercial	19.5	23.3	21.2
Manufacturing	17.7	3.8	3.1

Agricultural	10.4	2.5	2.4
Other	1.8	2.2	2.2
	100 %	100 %	100 %

While reducing business property taxes is well intentioned, this bill is highly problematic. It cuts college and all local government funding by eliminating exempt computer aid. It also shifts more of each dollar levied onto residential taxes. While the shift itself does not reduce college resources, it affects all property taxpayers in terms of the share of taxes they carry compared with others.

Recommended position: Oppose.

New – LRB-2906 – Student Loan Assistance for Critical Industry Sectors

This bill is currently being circulated for co-sponsorship by Senator Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point). It has not yet been formally introduced.

Under the bill, the Secretaries of WEDC and DWD, in consultation with the Superintendent of DPI, the UW System, the technical college system, and local workforce investment boards, must identify economic industry sectors, projecting at least four years into the future, that are or will be critical to Wisconsin's economy. In determining which industry sectors are critical to Wisconsin's economy, the secretaries must consider wage and benefits paid to employees in these sectors. Information on the critical economic industry sectors and this student loan forgiveness program, along with informational and promotional materials, would be provided to high school guidance counselors to assist students with their career planning needs.

To qualify for Student Loan Reimbursement, individuals must:

- Have obtained an associates, bachelors, or post-graduate degree
- Have been a resident of Wisconsin at the time he or she graduated
- Enrolled in a postsecondary institution on or after the effective date of this bill.
- Become employed in Wisconsin within 18 months of graduation in an economic sector identified by the Secretaries of WEDC and DWD
- Remain employed in Wisconsin throughout the period of loan forgiveness in an economic sector identified by the Secretaries of WEDC and DWD
- Remain a resident in Wisconsin throughout the period of loan forgiveness

Under the bill, individuals would receive payments toward their student loans in equal shares over a maximum of 5 years. The total combined annual payments would be equal to 20% of the individual's outstanding student loan balance, up to a maximum of \$15,000.

Recommended position: Support, pending additional information on overall costs.

New – LRB-3110/LRB-2974 – Transferring College Funds to Wisconsin Grants

These companion bills are currently being circulated for co-sponsorship by Representative Heaton (R-Wausau) and Senator Harsdorf (R-River Falls). They have not yet been formally introduced.

Under current law, the Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) administers the need-based Wisconsin Grants program (formerly known as WHEG), which provides grants to resident postsecondary students enrolled in institutions of higher education, including technical colleges. These bills would provide additional funding for Wisconsin Grants to technical college students by allowing the System Board to solicit “contributions” from local technical college district boards to fund the state’s grant program. In addition, the bill would permit the System Board to transfer general aid, categorical grant aid, or other operating dollars to HEAB.

The state would then match the amount of operating funds transferred to grants, up to \$1 million annually.

The state has underfunded Wisconsin Grants (WG) for technical college students for many years, leaving tens of thousands of eligible students on unfunded “waitlists” each year, even though 55% of technical college students have so few resources, their “expected family contribution” to the cost of college is \$0, under federal financial aid calculations. The current technical college WG appropriation stands at \$18.8 million annually, while the UW appropriation is funded at \$58.3 million annually and the private/non-profit college and university appropriation is \$26.9 million annually. The System Board for decades has maintained a responsible, predictable tuition policy, to help keep the training and education available at technical colleges affordable for all Wisconsinites. Meanwhile, the state has punished that reasonableness by chronically short-changing these need-based grants, which are so desperately needed by those working to move up from the lowest rungs of the economic ladder. Now the state again seeks to short-change our students, this time by cutting budgets for student services and instruction, in order to provide a relatively small level of need-based financial aid.
Recommended Position: Oppose.

New – LRB-3619 -- Technical Excellence Scholarships

This draft is currently being circulated for co-sponsorship, and has not yet been formally introduced.

2013 Act 60 created the Technical Excellence Scholarship (TES) that mirrored the existing Academic Excellence Scholarship (AES), which offers scholarships of \$2,250 a year to students at the top of their graduating classes. The TES likewise offers scholarships of \$2,250 to students who excel at technical education, for use in the Wisconsin Technical College System. Like the AES, half the scholarship amount is

funded by the state, while the institution in which the recipient enrolls must fund the other half.

The bill draft would make the following changes to the new program: 1. a student must be enrolled for at least 6 credits (reduced from 12 under current law); 2. a technical college must certify the student's progress toward a degree or diploma; 3. a student must maintain at least a 2.0 GPA (down from 3.0 under current law). In addition, the bill clarifies that a student who loses eligibility can regain it in the subsequent school year by meeting the above criteria.

Recommended position: Support.

(End of Bills of Interest Section)

This report was prepared by Layla Merrifield, who is exclusively responsible for its content including any analysis or opinion. For more information, contact Layla Merrifield at 608 266-9430 or lmerrifield@districtboards.org.

A Guide to Reading Bill Histories follows:

Reading Wisconsin Bill Histories – A Guide to the Basics

Wisconsin Technical College District Boards Association

The text, sponsors, and procedural history of each state legislative bill are available at the Wisconsin Legislature’s website, <http://legis.wisconsin.gov>. Enter the bill number, e.g., “AB xx,” under “**Find a Proposal.**” In the search results, click on the specific bill.

At this site, under “**Links,**” readers will find the full bill text, any Report of Committee Proceedings (“ROCP”), Government Accountability Board Information (Lobbying positions on the bill), and other documents. Any twin bill introduced in the other house is linked under “**See Also.**” The bill’s history and status is found under “**History.**”

When reviewing a specific bill history online, the following guide may be helpful:

Introduced by	Lists all legislators who have signed-on as a bill’s co-sponsor.
Fiscal estimates	(Link to) estimated state (but not local) costs of implementing the bill as a new law.
Read first time ...	Provides the committee to which bill is referred for a hearing.
Public hearing held ...	Hearing held at which public was able to testify or register a position on the bill. Legislators may offer amendments at the hearing.
Executive action taken ...	The committee voted on the bill, sending it to the full body with its recommendation/vote for passage by the full house.
Amendments	(Link to) any amendment that changes a bill text or a substitute amendment that replaces the original bill’s full text.
Assembly/Senate amendment	Link(s) to the numbered amendment(s) to the bill (appears as AA 1, SA 2, etc.).
Assembly/Senate “substitute” amendment	Link(s) to the numbered “substitute” amendment. A “substitute” amendment <i>replaces entire original bill.</i> (appears as ASA 3, SSA 2, etc.).
Second reading	The full body considers the bill after it comes back from committee. This is the point at which amendments from the committee or from the floor are debated and, if adopted, officially attached.

Third reading	Clears the way for a full vote to pass or defeat the bill (on the third reading the bill may be voted up or down but not amended). Allowing a third reading on the floor on the same day, as the second reading requires waiving the rules without objection. For controversial bills, those opposed may object to waiving the immediate third reading in order to slow down passage.
Tabling	To “park” or stop a bill or a motion or other proposed action.
Pulling	To remove a bill from committee and bring it to the floor without it first being acted upon and voted out of committee.
Referral	To stop action on the floor by returning or sending a bill back to a committee.
Voice vote	Adoption by the body without a roll call.
Ayes/Noes	Click on this link to see the member-by-member roll call vote (not available when the action was by “voice vote”).
Messaged	After passage, the action sending the bill to the other house.
Concurred in	One house’s adoption of the other’s bill or bill version.
Enrolled	The passed bill is packaged as a complete piece of legislation and is available to be called for by, or sent to, the Governor.
Report approved, vetoed, or vetoed in part	Reflects the Governor’s signing, veto, or (for appropriations bills only) partial veto.
Report published	The date on which the Secretary of State published the new law, making it official and putting it into effect as a law.
Act (number)	When a bill becomes law it is transformed from a bill number to “2015 Act xx.” Click on the Act number to see the new law.