

## **Legislative Report** – Mrs. Bishop

The PA legislature is back in session. The Republican majority in the House has widened (111-91) but Republican control of the Senate has narrowed to 27-23, as the Democrats picked up 3 seats in the November election. One item that appears to be headed for swift legislative action with bipartisan support is a set of recommendations issued by a task force in November to improve state laws regarding child abuse prevention and investigation.

Governor Corbett is slated to present his 2013-14 budget proposal on February 5. Corbett has said that in his budget address, he will outline a new school safety effort. He has also indicated that one key to finding more funding for education and other human services is reducing the cost of public employee pensions. Potential proposed changes to PSERS include measures to reduce the future earnings of current employees that are used in the pension benefit calculation, limiting pension earnings to base salary (excluding overtime pay, for example) and adjusting how the final years of employee salaries are calculated. It has been reported that a group of House Republicans is studying public pensions, trying to develop a strategy.

The Senate Majority Policy Committee was scheduled to conduct a hearing today in Harrisburg on Special Education challenges for public school districts. At the invitation of our Senator Randy Vulakovich, North Allegheny's Arleen Wheat (Assistant Superintendent for Special Education and Pupil Services) was asked to present testimony at the hearing. Thanks, Arleen!

I reported last fall that PDE had implemented a new way of determining whether charter schools have met student achievement targets for AYP under No Child Left Behind. Their new method was far less stringent than the standards that must be met by traditional public schools, which until last fall were also applied to charter schools. PDE implemented the change without the prior approval of the US DOE. Using the new criteria, 77 charter schools, including 1 cyber charter school, made AYP. The US DOE subsequently disapproved the change in methodology and ordered PDE to recalculate the results to more accurately reflect the performance of charter schools as compared to traditional public schools. As a result, only 43 charter schools (not 77) achieved AYP. No cyber charter schools made AYP. The percentage of charter schools meeting AYP benchmarks is 28%, not 49% as previously reported by PDE.

The PA School Boards Association and the Allegheny Intermediate Unity are hosting a legislative meeting with our local legislators two days after the budget address. All Pittsburgh area school directors are invited, along with superintendents, administrators, union presidents, teachers, and PFA/PTO presidents. The meeting will be February 7 at 7:30 p.m. at the AIU in the waterfront. This is a great opportunity for some dialogue with our PA legislators right at the start of the budget process this year. I would encourage Board members, staff members and members of our community to attend.

You may also wish to mark your calendars for January 26 at 11:30 a.m., when WPCB will air an edition of PA Newsmakers (hosted by Dr. Terry Madonna at Franklin and Marshall) featuring PA Education Secretary Ron Tomalis addressing the topics of “education reform” and the Common Core Standards that are being implemented in PA.