



# Legislative Update

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## SESSION BEGINS!

The 2021 legislative session began at noon on Wednesday, January 6, 2021. Both chambers swore in newly-elected members and selected key leadership positions. The Senate approved Sen. Dave Schatz as President Pro Tem. Sen. Caleb Rowden will serve as Majority Floor Leader and Sen. John Rizzo will serve as Minority Floor Leader.

The House elected Rep. Rob Vescovo as Speaker. Rep. Dean Plocher will serve as Majority Floor Leader and Rep. Crystal Quade will serve as Minority Floor Leader. Speaker Vescovo offered opening remarks that focused significant attention on education issues, including a statement of support for tax-credit-style vouchers to divert public funds to private schools. The remarks also included support for enacting COVID-19 liability waivers.

The Senate convened on January 7 to approve new rules for this session. The rules debate lasted about four hours. Much of the debate focused on use of technology in the Senate chamber and electronic filing of floor amendments, though only minor changes in the rules address this topic. The other change of note was eliminating the Government Reform Committee and moving its committee jurisdiction into an expanded Governmental Accountability and Fiscal Oversight (GAFO) Committee that will now hold original committee hearings on bills addressing government efficiency and continue to hold fiscal review hearings prior to final Senate approval of any bill with a significant impact on state revenues.

The House will convene on January 8 for a technical session, while the Senate has adjourned until next week.

House and Senate committee rosters are being updated and committees will begin work soon. The MNEA Legislative Update will keep you informed in a timely manner concerning developments on legislation affecting students and schools and will advise you of actions you can take to affect the legislative process.

## GOVERNOR RELEASES SOME WITHHELD FUNDS, BUT NOT SCHOOL FORMULA FUNDS

On January 6, Governor Parson released a portion of the \$449 million in funds that he withheld at the beginning of the current fiscal year. The Governor released nearly \$26 million in funding for higher education, including release of the remaining withheld core funding for community colleges, the state technical college and four-year public institutions along with \$1.7 million in Bright Flight scholarship funds. The Governor also released \$1.55 million in K-12 funding, including funds for STEM career awareness, computer science education, early literacy and adult basic education.

The Governor has yet to release any of the \$123 million in funds that he withheld from the K-12 school formula this fiscal year. The Governor and legislature must commit to do more to meet the needs of all Missouri students.

## **MNEA'S EDUCATION PLATFORM**

Students are at the center of Missouri NEA's legislative platform and advocacy. MNEA believes that every child has a basic right to attend a great public school. The Association strives to ensure that all students have the time and resources to learn, caring and qualified teachers and an education that inspires their natural curiosity and desire to learn.

MNEA also continues to lead the fight to defeat the proposals that would harm public education. The Association's legislative advocacy must ensure that legislators fulfill their commitments to stand up for children and public education during the legislative session.

## **CONNECT WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS AS AN MNEA EDUCATION ADVOCATE!**

You're the expert! Tell legislators how legislation would affect you, your students, and your schools. As an educator, you're already knowledgeable about the resources and support students and your colleagues need.

You can help create a better future and support MNEA's legislative effort by becoming an MNEA Education Advocate. Due to the global pandemic, MNEA will not hold the regular schedule of in-person Legislative Forums and Capitol Action Days this year. Instead, MNEA EA's will join virtual back-home visits to connect with their elected officials.

Sign up now to receive training and support to connect with your elected official as an MNEA Education Advocate by visiting: <https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/VolunteerActionCard.aspx>

## **USEFUL LINKS**

MNEA Issues and Action: <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/Issues-Action.aspx>

MNEA Legislative Action Center: <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/LegislativeActionCenter.aspx>

MNEA Education Advocates Program (includes signup):  
<https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/PoliticalActionProgram.aspx>

MNEA Legislative Updates (includes signup):  
<https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/StateLegislativeUpdates.aspx>

MNEA Legislative Platform and Priorities: <https://www.mnea.org/Missouri/PlatformPriorities.aspx>

MNEA App: <http://www.mnea.org/Missouri/News/Download-the-Missouri-NEA-Mobile-App-Today-413.aspx>

### **Legislative Update 2021**

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