

Look out below...

Deb Merle, WSSDA Government Relations

The avalanche of bills continues. Just under two thousand bills have been introduced so far this session - which means there are at least another 2,000 to come over the next few weeks.

There won't be much public action on the operating budget until the mid-march revenue forecast comes out. So, the hubbub remains on policy bills, and lots of them, as we begin week five of the regular session. Public records, voting rights, the Growth Management Act, high school assessments, and Seattle's school board and district configuration were all in the spotlight this week.

Providing public records electronically

While it does not happen often, so-called "harassing, serial requesters" can pop up unexpectedly and wreak havoc when they do. Most school districts can't plan ahead, or budget for, or have a staff person devoted to responding to serial requesters who are bent on jamming up the works. Representative Takko's [HB 1684](#), which amends the Public Records Act (PRA) to establish a fee for records requested electronically, was heard this week in the House State Government Committee. The PRA already allows a \$.15 per copy charge for paper records.

Everyone who testified (including PRA purists) agreed that requesters should have some "skin in the game" when asking for records electronically. But, it will take time to get this right. The bill requires that the first 10 megabytes of material be provided free of charge. That's about 400 pieces of paper, but only a few seconds of streamed video. Stayed tuned for amendments to work out equivalent fees for different types of electronic data. Read more about WSSDA's position on this bill in the [letter](#) to the House State Government Committee from the Executive Committee of the WSSDA Board of Directors.

High School Assessments

The House Education Committee heard three bills about high school graduation requirements and assessments this week. [HB 1363](#) would simply "delink" the two; no more high-stake's tests required for graduation. During the hearing, the bill's sponsor, Representative Hunt, threw his support behind a different bill – [HB 1785](#), which goes further. Representative Reydal's bill delinks assessments from graduation, and allows for transition courses and alternative pathways to graduation. Finally, the Governor's request bill, [HB 1703](#), maintains the requirement that students pass state-wide assessments in order to graduate, phases out the end-of-course exams in Math and also includes transition course options.

WSSDA's testified in support of removing state-wide assessments as a high school graduation requirement. We're also staying engaged in the conversations about alternative options and transition courses.

See the WSSDA [Bill Watch List](#) and annotated [Hearing Schedule](#) for a complete list of bills we're tracking and committee meetings of particular interest.

Week five and the 60 second clock

With only six more 2-hour hearings scheduled in the House and Senate Education Committees before policy bill cutoff, the scramble for space on agendas is intense and testimony timers are short. Policy committees will race to hear as many bills as they can between now and cutoff on February 20th. At 5:00 that Friday, bills that have not been heard and passed out of policy committees turn into pumpkins, unless they have a fiscal component. Fiscal bill cutoff is one week later. The "luxury" of two or, be still my heart, three minutes of testimony allowed on each bill is over in most committees for the next few weeks.

Have some fun this week!