



PARSS LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

October 12, 2023

[A Change in the Primary Date Could Change Your Budget Cycle—Part II](#)

Two weeks ago, we reported that there was significant legislative interest in moving the 2024 primary date earlier in order to eliminate a conflict with Passover and to position the state as a much earlier player in the presidential primary schedule. The most significant ramification for schools in moving the date earlier is that many Act 1 school budget deadlines are tied to the annual primary date.

The Senate gave strong bi-partisan support (45-2) last month to [Senate Bill 224](#) which would move the primary date next year (and only next year) to March 19. Last week, the House State Government Committee moved a competing proposal to the House floor, [House Bill 1634](#), which would move next year's primary date to April 2. On October 5, the House approved the bill in a contentious debate on a partly line, razor thin margin of 102-100. With several amendments not related to the change in the primary date that were opposed by the House Republican Caucus the bill is not likely to move in the Senate unless we see a large dose of détente in the relationship between the two chambers, unlikely particularly in the short term.

Why is this relevant to schools? Many key Act 1 budget deadlines are annually built on the primary election date. Currently, both the Senate and House versions

do not provide for any adjustment in the Act 1 timeline. Assuming there is no breakthrough on the issue, January 4, 2024, is a key deadline for adopting a resolution not to exceed the index or prepare a preliminary budget. If the Senate version of the primary date change (March 19) is enacted, the January 4 deadline would be backed up to November 30 of this year. If the House version succeeds, the key date is shifted to December 14, 2023. At this point, getting an agreement on a date change does not seem to be in the cards.

State Budget Unfinished Business—Part II

We told you previously that the House was returning late last month to take up the “Code Bills” to wrap up the state budget process. The House did return and sent to the Senate a litany of bills including School Code, Fiscal Code, and Tax Code bills. However, the final outcome of the process (getting these bills to the Governor’s desk) does not appear in sight. Again, without any negotiation between the chambers we are at another impasse. The School Code is now larger than usual in terms of scope and will require trade-offs between Senate Rs and House Ds. [House Bill 27](#) is now a 145-page omnibus School Code amendment. [Here is more info](#) on some of the components of the bill.

What this means for schools is that new program authorizations will be on hold until the two chambers can agree on a final version. More détente is needed!

Both chambers return to session on Monday.

Stay tuned!