



Week of Dec. 5 – Dec. 9

Senate passes education overhaul bill, House action still uncertain

The Ohio Senate on Wednesday passed [Senate Bill \(SB\) 178](#) by a vote of 22-7, with two Republicans voting against the bill. Prior to the Senate vote, the committee adopted an amendment quickening the bill's implementation timeline and passed the measure on a party-line vote. Tony provided "interested party" testimony, [accessible here](#), and a [video of his testimony is accessible here](#).

On the floor, Senate President **Matt Huffman** [left the dais to speak in favor of the bill](#), a rare occurrence for the chamber's leader to speak on a bill, which signaled his serious intent to finalize the bill this month. Fellow supporter Gov. **Mike DeWine** told reporters he spoke with House Speaker **Bob Cupp** on the matter and said the issue is "very important" to him. Cupp, however, remains positionless on his chamber's plans for the bill and, according to Huffman, the two have not been in direct conversation on the matter. "Many members in the House" support the proposal, according to Huffman. Pressure on Cupp also mounts from influential business groups, including Ohio Excels, the Ohio Business Roundtable, and National Federation of Independent Businesses.

Passage of SB 178 appears to be a foregone conclusion under the next legislative session when Rep. **Derek Merrin** will be installed as the next speaker. The questions for Cupp now are: will he delay the inevitable and also the installment of Ohio's top education official, or will he concur with his fellow Republicans and put the issue to rest?

A committee hearing on SB 178 is not yet scheduled but is likely to occur early next week. Both chambers have session dates scheduled for Dec. 13 and Dec. 14 and an if-needed date for Dec. 21.

Other legislative news

The Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee held hearings on a variety of bills, including [House Bill \(HB\) 151](#), [HB 554](#), and [HB 606](#). HB 151 was amended to permit holders of an alternative resident educator license to teach preschool. It also removed the bill's requirement for students to prove their sex based on a signed physician's statement and, instead, requires the school or OHSAA to determine the sex of a student based on their birth certificate showing the student's sex designated at birth. Additional amendments and a committee vote on HB 151 are expected next week. Gov. DeWine declined to tell reporters his thoughts on the bill saying, "I'm going to look at (the bill) when (the legislature is) done."

Debate continues on [House Joint Resolution 6](#), the resolution increasing the constitutional ballot threshold from 50% to 60%, and a pair of elections bills ([HB 458](#) and [HB 294](#)), which include the elimination of the August special election, among other provisions. Passage of these items are expected over the next two weeks.

House Democrats announce leadership team

House Democrats last week announced their leadership team, as follows:

- Rep. **Allison Russo** will return as minority leader;

- Rep. **Dontavius Jarrells** will serve as assistant minority leader;
- Rep. **Jessica Miranda** will return as minority whip;
- Rep. **Tavia Galonski** will serve as assistant minority whip.