

SNIFFEN & SPELLMAN, P.A.



Education Law Alert

February 2019

Ron DeSantis Calls to Impanel Grand Jury on School Safety

On the eve of the anniversary of the Parkland shooting Governor DeSantis announced that he petitioned the Florida Supreme Court to impanel a statewide grand jury to investigate school districts throughout the state regarding their school safety practices. DeSantis says he made the decision in order to go beyond the scope granted to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission, which was tasked primarily with analyzing the causes of the shooting at that school last year. The Governor stated that in addition to the statewide scope of the grand jury, the panel's subpoena power will have more teeth compared to the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Public Safety Commission's subpoena power.

Read more [here](#).

Gov. Ron DeSantis Issues Bills on His Key Education Ideas

Gov. Ron DeSantis challenged law makers to send him a bill that provides for the creation of taxpayer-funded scholarship for more children to attend private schools. Following the statement, the Governor and his team released their own versions of the bills they hope to see on scholarships, teacher performance pay, graduation requirements, and more.

State Rep. Chris Latvala, chairman of House PreK-12 Appropriations and vice chair of House Education, acknowledged the Governor's prerogative to put forward a budget and conforming bills that would establish new ideas. However, he stated that the Legislature might approve, rewrite, or outright kill the ideas, depending on the will of the majority.

Read more [here](#).

Florida Could Expand Law That Allows Armed Teachers

The Senate Education Committee approved a bill on a 5-3 vote Tuesday that would make all teachers eligible for a program that allows armed teachers. The committee approved the bill with all Republicans in favor and all Democrats opposed.

Currently, school districts can choose to allow teachers who have another role at a school, such as a sports coach, to carry arms under a voluntary program. Non-teaching staff can also participate. Teachers and employees have to undergo training, background checks and a psychological evaluation. The bill would make all teachers eligible for the program.

Read the case [here](#).

DeSantis takes aim at Common Core in executive order

Governor DeSantis announced an executive order asking the commissioner of education Richard Corcoran to spend a year creating new state curriculum standards, which would then be presented to the Legislature for the 2020 session. DeSantis also said the new standards should make civics education even more of a “central part” of what students learn so they can “discharge the duties of citizenship.”

Read more [here](#).

With New Leadership in House, Expectations Build for College Transparency Legislation

California governor Gavin Newsom called for investing \$10 million in a data system that would track outcomes in K-12, higher education and the work force. Such a system would allow the state to monitor the success of individual schools in getting students to and through college and into well-paying jobs. His proposal was the latest illustration of how state leaders are looking for workarounds for the current federal ban on collecting student-level data.

After Democrats took the House in November, the prospects of undoing the ban appear much stronger. Some key lawmakers and college groups still have reservations that could create other roadblocks for legislation. But the most influential opponent of a federal data system, Representative Virginia Foxx, is no longer running the House education committee after holding the gavel for the past two years. In 2008, it was Foxx, a North Carolina Republican, herself who wrote the current ban into federal law.

Read more [here](#).

Out-of-state PAC Slams Joe Gruters for LGBTQ Bill

State Senator Joe Gruters sponsored SB 438 that outlaws workforce discrimination based on sexual orientation or gender identify. The Sarasota Republican maintains the bill respects individuals and will be an important step forward for the state attracting major corporations.

The legislation has drawn criticism from the left and the right and has started to attract attention from outside Florida. The Texas-based Courageous Conservatives PAC said “[w]e’re sick of seeing conservative candidates outpunched by weak ‘moderates’ who lie about their own records of failure and appeasement while attacking strong conservatives fighting for what we believe,” regarding Gruters as the chair of the Republican Party of Florida.

Read more [here](#).

From the Lighter Side: Topless Handyman

A three-day undercover sting to detect unlicensed contractors in Pinellas County, called “Operation Punch List,” uncovered a man posing as an independent contract that advertised himself on craigslist as the “Topless Handyman.”

The ad showed Jason Liggitt, 46, wearing short-shorts and no shirt. “I can put up your fence, or take down your shed,” the ad reads. “Paint your wall, or trip your door. I can hang your curtains, or lay your floor. I’ll do it topless, but don’t ask for more!” Liggitt showed up to the sting in an Uber car with no tools, Pinellas County Sheriff Bob Gualtieri said.