March 31, 2017 Legislative Update

The 2017 session of the Kentucky General Assembly came to a close on March 30, 2017, at 11:55 pm. There were nearly 900 bills filed in this short legislative session. Under the new majority, the General Assembly passed major legislation that represents significant policy changes for the Commonwealth, including Right to Work, repeal of prevailing wage, Charter Schools legislation, performance funding for postsecondary education, and a number of K-12 policy changes.

Over the course of the legislative session, WKU Government Relations staff tracked 120 bills; of those, 20 have already been signed into law and four additional bills have been delivered to the Governor. All of WKU’s priority pieces of legislation have been signed by Governor Bevin. Below is an overview of WKU’s priority legislation.

SB153, the Performance Funding Bill, has been signed by Governor Bevin. The bill was passed without any amendments, which is what WKU advocated. Dr. Ransdell chaired the Performance Funding Workgroup and provided testimony on the bill in the House Appropriations and Revenue committee meeting. You can read the full bill here: http://www.lrc.ky.gov/recoddocuments/bill/17RS/S3153/bill.pdf

SB147 eliminated the limitation on the number of Advanced Practice Doctorate degrees that the comprehensive universities can offer. This bill has been signed by Governor Bevin. You can read the full bill here: http://www.lrc.ky.gov/recoddocuments/bill/17RS/SB147/bill.pdf

SB107, the board governance bill, makes provisions for the Governor to remove individual board members if a board is deemed to be out of compliance with regard to statutorily required party, race, and, in some cases, gender proportional membership and also allows the Governor to remove an entire board if the board is deemed to be dysfunctional. The bill also requires university board appointees to be confirmed by the Senate. This bill has also been signed by Governor Bevin. You can read the full bill here: http://www.lrc.ky.gov/recoddocuments/bill/17RS/SB107/SCS1.pdf

Other pieces of legislation of interest are listed below.

SB17 is a free speech bill with language that, among other things, provides that students (K-12 and postsecondary) are free to express religious and political beliefs in school assignments without discrimination. SB17 has been signed by Governor Bevin. You can read the full bill here: http://www.lrc.ky.gov/recoddocuments/bill/17RS/SB17/SCS1.pdf

HB471 is an amendment to the 2016-18 Executive Branch Budget bill. It includes provisions to fully fund the veterinary medicine and optometry contract spaces that are held for Kentucky students at out-of-state institutions. The bill also includes the lease agreement between the University of Kentucky College of Medicine and the
Medical Center of Bowling Green, which was needed to allow that project to proceed on schedule. Governor Bevin line item vetoed one part of this bill, but the legislature overrode that veto. The bill has been delivered to the Secretary of State. You can read the full bill here:

HB206 is a dual credit scholarship bill that will allow eligible high school students to apply for a scholarship funds to pay for up to two dual credit courses at a rate that is one-third the cost of per credit hour courses at KCTCS. The bill also enables high school graduates to apply KEES funds to apprenticeship programs. This bill was passed in the final hours of the legislative session and has been delivered to Governor Bevin. You can read the full bill here:

SB1, is known as the “Let Teachers Teach” bill. This bill contains a number of policy changes for K-12 education. SB1 was amended with a Senate Committee Substitute and House Floor Amendments 2 and 5, and was passed in the final hours of the legislative session. It has been delivered to Governor Bevin. You can read the full bill here: http://www.lrc.ky.gov/recorddocuments/bill/17RS/SB1/SCS1.pdf
House Floor Amendment 2:
House Floor Amendment 5:

HB502, establishes public charter schools in Kentucky. This bill has been signed by Governor Bevin. You can read the full bill here:

This session WKU again hosted the Louie B. Nunn Kentucky Teacher Hall of Fame, which includes a luncheon for the three inductees and their guests. Lt. Governor Jenean Hampton attended and spoke at the luncheon, and several legislators that represent the home districts of the honorees attended and presented them with formal House and/or Senate citations. The induction ceremony was held in the Capitol Rotunda, and speakers included Kentucky Education Commissioner Stephen Pruitt, Senate President Pro Tem David Givens, and House Education Chairman John “Bam” Carney.

On March 8, both the House and the Senate honored WKU President Gary Ransdell with formal citations and standing ovations for his 20 years of service to WKU.
For the full list of legislation tracked this session and final status of those bills, click here: http://www.wku.edu/govrelations/documents/2017-ltr-3-31-update.pdf