

The Association report

from the Capitol

February 8, 2017

In recent years, Missouri state employees have not had much recognition or good news from the legislature. Salaries have remained essentially stagnant and benefits have diminished - and in some cases - eliminated. The state's contribution to the deferred compensation plan, for instance, has disappeared all together.

There is a bill introduced recently which is designed to make state employment more attractive. That bill, HB729, would return the retirement system's vesting requirement to five years. A 10-year vesting requirement was imposed as part of the last major retirement system overhaul in a 2010 special legislative session.

The 2010 retirement changes, sponsored by former Sen. Jason Crowell, were intended to modernize and shore-up the retirement systems. While that may or may not have happened, applying for a state job became less attractive. We found out that a number of well-qualified potential employees were no longer interested in working for the state if it took 10 years to become vested.

HB729, which was introduced on Jan. 29, has not been assigned to a house committee. It is sponsored by Rep. Mike Bernskoetter who has in past years promoted legislation favorable to state workers. In 2016 and 2015, Mr. Bernskoetter sponsored legislation to raise the state's maximum contribution to the deferred comp program from \$75 to \$100 a month. In 2014, he sponsored HCR45 which reauthorized the Joint Interim Committee on state employee wages.

The legislative session has been underway for about a month and a more definite shape and general direction has begun to emerge. I'll have more on this as it unfolds.

**From Harry Hill, Lobbyist
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