

Legislative Briefing

Technology transfer

Undaunted by voter defeat, state lawmakers renewed efforts Tuesday to let universities share their technology with private companies in exchange for a stake in the profits.

House Bill 2467 and House Concurrent Resolution 2038 are virtual duplicates of Proposition 102, which was rejected in November.

They would let the Board of Regents acquire an ownership interest in companies in exchange for university-developed technology. In one change from the ballot measure, the research could not be for human cloning or stem-cell research.

Todd Bankofier of the Arizona Technology Council, which backed the unsuccessful ballot measure, said voters were turned off by the title, which said it related to taxation.

The measures were approved 3-2 Tuesday by the House Committee on Universities, Community Colleges and Technology.

Vouchers advance

The House Appropriations Committee voted 9-6 Tuesday to provide state-funded vouchers parents could use to pay tuition at private and parochial schools for their children.

Vouchers under House Bill 2625 would be worth up to \$3,500 for youngsters in kindergarten through eighth grade and \$4,500 for high schoolers.

Backers contend the measure would save money because it would divert youngsters from public schools where state aid to education costs more.

Foes not only question the math but also question whether it runs afoul of a state constitutional provision that bars the state from giving money to private or sectarian schools.

But supporters say the money is going to the parents who, in turn, will use it to pay for the schools.

Medical malpractice

The Senate voted approval Tuesday to a series of changes designed to benefit doctors who are sued for malpractice.

Senate Bill 1036 would require that expert witnesses called by patients to prove that a doctor's conduct did not meet the standard of care must be physicians who specialize in the same practice.

It also would permit a defense attorney to interview other doctors who treated the patient.

The measure, which now goes to the House after the 19-10 vote, also says an apology or explanation by a doctor to a patient or family cannot be used in court.

Drunken driving

How to comment

- Legislative switchboard in Phoenix: 1-800-352-8404.
- Tucson satellite office: 398-6000.
- Internet: www.azleg.state.az.us

On a 28-1 vote, the Senate agreed Tuesday to require a police officer to impound or immobilize the vehicle of a driver arrested for driving while intoxicated.

Current law makes that an option. Senate Bill 1254 would make it a mandate. Also covered would be the vehicle of anyone 20 or younger arrested while driving with any alcohol in his or her system.

The proposal also would permit an officer to impound or immobilize a vehicle if the person was driving on a suspended license.

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