

Facilities legislation includes plan to have locks inside and outside new classes

By Tom Chorneau

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Repercussions from the notorious 1999 Columbine High School tragedy are still working through the lawmaker process. Indeed, legislation pending in the state Assembly would require that new classrooms have locks that can be utilized both from the outside and inside.

AB 85 by Assemblyman Tony Mendoza, D-Artesia, sets a start date of July 1, 2012 for all K-12 modernization projects as well as all new construction or alteration of community college facilities submitted to the Division of State Architects – to include locks that allow doors to classrooms and any room with occupancy of five or more persons to be locked from the inside.

Mendoza cited Columbine as one of the motivations for the bill, where two high school students killed 12 students and a teacher. “If teachers and other school staff do not have the capability to lock the outside from the inside, there could be a delay in time which could increase exposure to harmful situations,” Mendoza said.

The bill was approved late last month by the Assembly Education Committee and is pending before the Committee on Higher Education.

Other facility bills of interest:

AB 331 by Assemblywoman Julia Brownley D-Santa Monica. This bill would state the intent of the Legislature to enact legislation that would create the Kindergarten-University Public Education Facilities Bond Act of 2012, a state general obligation bond act that would provide funds to construct and modernize education facilities, to become operative only if approved by the voters at the next statewide general election, and to provide for the submission of the bond act to the voters at that election.

The bill is pending before the Assembly Education Committee.

AB 405 by Assemblyman Jose Solorio, D-Santa Ana. This bill would authorize a school district to enter into a joint use project with a community college district. Additionally, the bill would require the board of governors, upon funding being made available, to establish and govern the California Community College Joint Use Program, to support the creation of joint use facilities on community college campuses.

AB 405 passed out of the Assembly Education Committee and was referred to the Committee on Higher Education.

SB 128 by Sen. Alan Lowenthal, D-Long Beach. This bill would expand the use of modernization funding under the School Facility Program to include the cost of designs and materials that promote the characteristics of high-performance schools. The bill would also expand eligibility for funding from the High Performance Incentive grant to include projects approved to receive a Career Technical Education Facilities Program grant.

SB 128 has been placed on the Senate Appropriations suspense file, which means that it is unlikely to be considered until issues surrounding the state budget have been resolved.

SB 822 by Sen. Noreen Evans, D-Santa Rosa. Existing law requires the Governor, in conjunction with the Governor’s Budget, to submit annually to the Legislature a proposed 5-year infrastructure plan containing specified information concerning infrastructure needed by state agencies, public schools, and public postsecondary educational institutions and a proposal for funding the needed

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infrastructure. This bill would also require the Governor to submit the infrastructure plan to the Treasurer.

The bill has been assigned to the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee but has not yet been considered.

SB 788 by Lowenthal. This bill would require the State Allocation Board, in consultation with the State Department of Education and the Department of Finance, to report, on or before March 1, 2012, to the Legislature and the Governor regarding the status of the school facility program, including funds remaining, future eligibility for programs, and when funds are estimated to be depleted.

The bill is awaiting policy committee assignment.

SB 891 also by Lowenthal. This bill would require the State Allocation Board to appoint an ombudsman, who would report directly to the board, to provide assistance and guidance to school districts as their construction projects proceed through approvals from the State Department of Education, the Department of Toxic Substances Control, the Division of the State Architect, and the Office of Public School Construction.

This bill is pending before the Senate Education Committee.