

## New bills: school facilities

By Tom Chorneau

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With the deepening recession and the state's ongoing budget problems, there's little general fund money available for any purpose including the repair or modernization of school classrooms. But lawmakers in this legislative session are nonetheless offering a variety of bills aimed at school facility operations, finance and governance.

One of the key proposals, AB 220, is from Assemblywoman Julia Brownley, D-Santa Monica, chair of the Assembly's Education Committee. She's proposed the Kindergarten-University Public Education Facilities Bond Act of 2009.

The bill would set a school facility bond to go before voters at the November 3, 2009, statewide general election should such a special election be called. Otherwise, the measure might be delayed until the 2010 regular election. Details are not yet included about how large a bond and exactly how the money would be shared between districts, community colleges and the universities.

SB 365 by state Sen. Denise Ducheny, D-San Diego, would revise the makeup of the State Allocation Board.

Currently, the board is made up of the Director of Finance, the Director of General Services, a person appointed by the governor, the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and three members from each house of the Legislature. SB 365 would increase the number of gubernatorial appointment to four but require more expertise of the members in educational construction or finance and stagger the terms. The bill would also reduce the number of appointments from the Legislature from three to two, and give the legislature the option of appointing public members.

There's also two bills in the state Senate dealing with seismic mitigation: SB 305 by Sen. Ellen Corbett, D-San Leandro and SB 375 by Sen. Loni Hancock, D- Berkeley.

Corbett's bill would state the intent for legislation that would modify the standards used to identify school districts that are eligible to receive hardship assistance for school seismic repair, reconstruction, or replacement of school buildings.

Hancock's proposal would significantly upgrade the requirements of the State Allocation Board over seismic mitigation. The board, if necessary, would adopt regulations to provide greater access to funding for school districts and county offices of education that have seismically at-risk school buildings, as defined. Also, they would be required to review and adopt regulations for apportioning funds pursuant to the Seismic Mitigation Program.

To ready the entire list of legislation that might affect school construction and facilities, click here: