



Federal tax bills and higher education. The U.S. House and Senate have both passed tax bills that will have major impacts on higher education. Key elements of the House version include taxing tuition assistance benefits for university employees, eliminating the tax deduction for student-loan interest, reducing or eliminating lifetime learning and other education credits, and [treating graduate tuition benefits like taxable income](#). The Senate version retains the deductions and credits, but that could change during the reconciliation process now underway. Both versions impose new taxes on nonprofits (including universities), reduce tax incentives for charitable giving, and cap deductions for state and local property taxes, which would affect public funding for universities and community colleges as well as for K-12 public schools. Michigan Senators Debbie Stabenow and Gary Peters both voted no on the Senate bill. Rep. Fred Upton voted yes on the House version. [Click here to learn more about the bills](#) and [here to read about the reconciliation process](#).

Concerned about the tax bill? The phone number for the U.S. Capitol switchboard is [\(202\) 224-3121](#).

Campus-carry legislation in Michigan: Will guns be allowed on campus? On November 8, the [Michigan Senate passed legislation \(SBs 584-586\) that would allow concealed weapons in previously exempt locations](#), e.g., schools, churches, stadiums, and bars. (The bills have not yet been taken up in the House, where they are also likely to pass. Gov. Snyder has not said whether he will sign the bills, but he has previously vetoed similar legislation.) While these bills are a matter of concern, it is unlikely even if they become law that they would affect the no-weapons policy in effect at WMU and similar policies at other state university campuses. That's because in Michigan, the state constitution grants governing autonomy to each public university, vested with its Board of Trustees, meaning that the legislature is limited in what it can impose on state universities. In other words, if the legislation passes the House and the governor signs it, the matter will be up to the WMU Board of Trustees. While there are no guarantees, it seems unlikely that they would reverse the existing policy.

Campus-carry laws outside Michigan: Do faculty members have the right to set standards for their

classrooms in campus-carry states? *Glass v. Paxton* is a legal challenge to Texas laws that require public colleges and universities in that state to allow guns on campus, including in classrooms. Several professors at the University of Texas-Austin have challenged the requirement that they allow guns in their classes. The district court dismissed the case in August 2016, ruling that the faculty members did not have standing to sue because they could not prove that they had been harmed by the law or the policy. Their appeal is now headed to the 5th Circuit. [Click here to read the amicus brief filed by the national AAUP in support of the professors.](#)

Oral arguments in *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31* expected in early 2018; decision expected late spring. Oral arguments before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Janus v. AFSCME Council 31*, an anti-union case challenging the constitutionality of agency fees for public-sector bargaining units, are expected to be scheduled for March (or possibly late February) 2018. If the court decides in favor of the plaintiff, as many legal experts believe it will, the decision would essentially establish so-called "right to work" rules as the law of the land. As of this writing, 28 states have "right to work" laws. Since 2013, Michigan has been one of them. A decision could come as early as May or June of next year. [Click here for more about the case.](#)

SCOTUS declines to hear *Hill v. SEIU*. In some rare but welcome good news, the U.S. Supreme Court declined last month to hear *Hill v. SEIU*, an Illinois case challenging the right of unions to serve as exclusive representatives of public-sector employees. The plaintiffs, non-dues-payers entitled to union representation under Illinois "right-to-work" laws, had claimed that exclusive representation violated their First and Fourteenth Amendment rights to free association. In May 2016, the district court dismissed the complaint, holding that the plaintiffs' argument "runs counter to the established principle that a state does not infringe on associational rights." The Seventh Circuit upheld the lower court decision in March 2017. [Click here for the SCOTUSBlog case page](#) and [here for a useful analysis of this and other anti-union lawsuits by Minnesota-based labor organizer Dave Kamper.](#)

Holiday happy hour Friday, December 8, at the Old Dog Tavern. Long semester? Need a break? Too much scary political news? Come on out and party with colleagues and build solidarity in a fun, family-friendly environment at the WMU-AAUP holiday happy hour this Friday. As always, for dues-paying members, your first drink is on us (first two if soda's your jam). IMPORTANT: Please note the change from our usual venue. We'll be at the Old Dog Tavern this time, at [402 E. Kalamazoo Ave](#), buying drinks and handing out holiday treats 5-6 p.m. See you there!

Resolution honoring Dr. Howard Bunsis. At the WMU-AAUP chapter meeting on November 10, 2017, the faculty voted unanimously in favor of a resolution to honor Dr. Howard Bunsis, professor of accounting at Eastern Michigan University, for his eight years of service as chair of the national AAUP Collective Bargaining Congress. During his tenure as AAUP-CBC chair (2009-17), Howard was an active and supportive friend to the WMU-AAUP Chapter and a tireless advocate for collective bargaining rights, higher education as a public good, and the empowerment of faculty nationwide. [Click here to read the full resolution.](#)

Save the date: A conversation with President Ed Montgomery on Friday, January 19. The WMU-AAUP Chapter will host WMU President Ed Montgomery for a conversation with the faculty, with refreshments, on Friday, January 19, 2018, 3:30-5 p.m. in 157 Bernhard. (This event immediately follows the WMU-AAUP Association Council meeting.) All WMU-AAUP bargaining-unit faculty are invited to this event.

Wishing everyone a low-stress end to the semester and a restorative holiday break!