



# Capitol Monitor

A Report on Activity at the State Capitol

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## Budget Deal Passes House and Senate:

With only one hour left in the legislative session and facing a Republican filibuster, Senate leaders were prepared to “call the question” to stop debate and demand a vote on the [budget](#), which is a rarely used tactic. But instead, at 11 p.m. on Wednesday, June 3, Republicans stopped their filibuster and [the budget](#) passed on a 19-17 vote. The budget represents, at the highest level, \$353.5 million for the Board of Regents. This is nearly \$13 million more than the Governor’s proposal and includes around \$9.4 million for developmental education and also allows roughly \$10 million toward tuition relief for students. In a statement to staff, BOR President Gregory Gray stated that the budget challenges would require some initiatives to be deferred, including Transform 2020.

## Legislating Criminal Background Checks:

Despite being passed out of more than two committees, Substitute [Senate Bill 861](#) that would require criminal background checks for any CSU faculty member up for promotion, died when it was sent from the senate floor to yet another committee and was not voted out of that committee. However, the bill arose again as an amendment attached to another piece of legislation in the Senate. Thanks to excellent advocacy by CSU-AAUP members, who were also constituents of the bill’s sponsor Senator Kevin Witkos, the senator agreed to drop the amendment. Meeting with six CSU-AAUP members and staff from his district, Senator Witkos was informed that faculty and staff already undergo strict background checks when being hired and there is a clearly defined disciplinary procedure already existing in the CSU-AAUP Collective Bargaining Agreement to deal with matters that require disciplinary action. CSU-AAUP opposed this bill from day one because adding further layers of bureaucracy to a university system that had seen their budgets slashed to the bone would have only added to the burden placed on our faculty and institutions. Singling out faculty for this - as opposed to any other state employee - would also have been unfair and some might even say discriminatory. Thanks to action taken by CSU-AAUP members and staff and the May meeting in his district, Senator Witkos agreed to withdraw his amendment and the bill is now dead.

## Proposed Changes To Fringe Benefits Dropped:

When Governor Malloy’s office recently suggested moving all employee fringe benefits from the Comptrollers budget (General Fund) to the Operating budget, CSU-AAUP members acted swiftly to send the message to the governor’s office that this plan would be disastrous. Had this proposal gone forward, it would have eliminated reimbursements universities receive from the federal government for the unfunded liability that they must pay. This move would have made every employee much more expensive and could have translated into layoffs, hiring freezes and more tuition dollars being used for employee benefits. The proposal was dropped after Governor Malloy’s office heard from CSU-AAUP members and union leaders about the negative impact that move would have on our CSUs.

## Faculty Representation On BOR:

[HB 6812](#) was passed by the House and Senate and waits for the Governor to sign it into law. This bill expands the role of the Faculty Advisory Committee to the Board of Regents, requiring the FAC’s chairperson and vice-chairperson be allowed to serve on any BOR committee or sub-committee that does not oversee personnel matters. The bill also allows them to attend a BOR executive session at the board’s invitation, rather than exclude them from all executive sessions as under current law. This law is posed to help strengthen shared governance at our CSUs and deepen the BOR’s understanding on matters of teaching, learning and the cultures at the four campuses.

## Textbook Bills:

Two textbook bills were of concern this session. [SB 931](#), prohibited faculty from requiring their students to use a new edition of a text book within three years of its most recent previous publication. That bill died in the house. The second, [HB 6117](#), requires the BOR and UConn to establish pilot programs to assess and promote the use of open-source textbooks within their own campuses. Through CSU-AAUP efforts, this bill was amended to include faculty members as part of the task force to study open-source textbook options and effectiveness. This bill passed the House and the Senate and awaits the governor’s signature.

## Student Loan Bill Of Rights:

As part of the Higher Education Not Debt coalition, CSU-AAUP supported [SB 6915](#) to create a [Student Loan Bill of Rights](#). Under this bill, a student loan ombudsman will be established to handle complaints and issue advice with regard to the rights and responsibilities of student loan borrowers. This bill passed the house and the senate and awaits the governor’s signature.

## Your Action Made A Difference:

After Governor Malloy issued his budget in February, our institutions faced further drastic cuts in funding. Together, CSU-AAUP members and staff lobbied the legislature to restore funding to our CSUs. Because of your advocacy, the budget that passed included nearly \$13 million more than the governor proposed. And again, when bills arose that would have negative impacts on teaching at our universities or that had the potential to strengthen shared governance, CSU-AAUP members joined together and made their voices heard. CSU-AAUP encourages faculty to continue contact with their legislators and urge them to support our CSUs. It is a fact that when we maintain a dialogue with our legislators we make our voices heard and get results. Legislators want to hear from you, their constituents. If you would like to contact your legislators and thank them for supporting our CSUs, please [click here](#) to find their contact information.

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**“Let us never forget that government is ourselves and not an alien power over us. The ultimate rulers of our democracy are not a President and senators and congressmen and government officials, but the voters of this country.” - Franklin D. Roosevelt**

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