

Crunch Week in the Legislature for Key WDEA Legislation

Sometimes the wheels of government turn slowly, and sometimes it seems everything happens at once. The latter will be the case next week when WDEA's top three priority bills all have their first committee hearing in the North Dakota Legislature.

Action starts Monday in the House Finance & Taxation Committee with a hearing on [HB 1368](#), which would give counties the option to appeal a State Board of Equalization decision to district court. Some oil-producing counties have been frustrated by recent state decisions that disregard the recommendations provided by valuation experts the counties have hired to appraise industrial properties. If those properties are under-valued, it shifts the tax burden to other business and residential property owners in the county. The legislation, sponsored by Representative [Don Longmuir](#), R-Stanley, would give counties the opportunity to present their evidence in a court of law.

The action continues Tuesday, when the same House committee will hear [HB 1366](#), legislation that would adjust the Hub City funding formula and provide an appropriation to fulfill oil impact grant commitments made in the 2015-17 biennium. The Hub City formula must be adjusted because of a change in the definition of employment. Currently, the hub cities of Dickinson, Minot and Williston receive \$375,000 for each percentage point attributable to oil & gas employment. But that employment calculation expires this year and will revert to the definition of mining employment, which in all cases is a lower percentage. The bill compensates for that change by increasing the amount for each percentage point of employment to \$600,000. That would maintain hub city funding at approximately the same level as the current biennium. The prime sponsor of HB 1366 is [Rep. Gary Sukut](#), R-Williston.

On Thursday, February 2, the House Transportation Committee will hear [HB 1320](#), a bill that is aimed at improving the functionality of WDEA's Uniform Truck Permit System. The legislation would compel townships in counties that are members of the truck permit system to also participate in the system. With regard to the e-permit system for state highways, the bill would also direct the ND Department of Transportation and Highway Patrol to "allow for the most efficient routing of oversized or overweight loads through the state highway system and take into consideration the impacts on city, county, township, and state roads." The bill would also prevent counties, cities and townships from charging additional fees for use of roads unless the person agrees to pay extra. The provision is intended to allow for situations in which a company knows it will damage a road, and rather than pay permit fees, it agrees to repair the road after its work is done. The truck permit legislation is sponsored by [Rep. Dan Ruby](#), R-Minot.