

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:30 P.M. on January 9, 2007, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent: Senator Apple and Senator Goodwin

Committee staff present: Sharon Wenger, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Michele Alishahi, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Ashley Holm, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Rochelle Chronister, Chairperson, 2010 Commission
Carolyn Campbell, member, 2010 Commission

Report of the 2010 Commission to the 2007 Kansas Legislature (Attachment 1)

Rochelle Chronister, Chairperson of the 2010 Commission, noted that the 2010 Commission was created by the Legislature two years ago and that the membership included persons with a wide variety of experience. She went on to outline the study topics assigned to the Commission. She noted that the Commission had not yet evaluated the school finance plan which the Legislature approved during the 2006 Legislative Session. She explained that the Legislative Coordinating Council referred the topic of the school transportation weighting formula to the Commission; however, the Commission ran out of time to work on it this year. In addition, she explained that Commission was instructed to make recommendations based on evidence of success. In this regard, the Commission spent a great deal of time traveling across the state to visit various school districts. Additionally, the At-Risk Council reported to the 2010 Commission in September 2006. The Commission plans to go to the Goodland-Colby area and Salina in the spring. She noted that English Language Learners (ELL) were becoming a growing concern for school officials across the state. She pointed out that the Commission recommended that the Legislature send a letter to the U.S. Department of Education requesting that more than one year be allowed between the time an ELL student enters a bilingual program and the time the student must take an assessment test. Senator Schodorf suggested that perhaps the Senate Education Committee could write the letter.

Ms. Chronister discussed the Commission's recommendations in the following key areas: (1) early education and educational reform, (2) improving the quality of staff, and (3) improved information. She also discussed the following notes the Commission included in its report which regarded issues in need of special attention: (1) children who are required to ride on a bus more than 60 minutes one way, (2) ensuring that schools are safe for all children, and (3) the importance of parental involvement in school activities. In conclusion, she called attention to a minority report filed by 2010 Commission member, Steve Illiff, which was attached to the report of the 2010 Commission. She noted that Mr. Illiff's minority report included comments on issues which the 2010 Commission did not address, and she responded to questions regarding the report.

Senator Schodorf called upon a Commission member, Carolyn Campbell, for further comments on the visits the Commission made to various schools across the state. Ms. Campbell commented that the visits were a wonderful experience for all Commission members. She noted that all school districts are struggling with the same concern – providing the best education for Kansas children. In addition, she noted that school districts are concerned about sufficient professional development. She observed that school districts were thankful for the additional funding the Legislature provided in 2006.

Senator Vratil reminded the Committee that, in 2006, the Legislature mandated an election for an increase in the local option budget above 30 percent. He requested the introduction of a bill which would delete that requirement and take the local option budget to prior law, which would allow for a protest petition.

Senator Lee moved to introduce the bill as requested by Senator Vratil, seconded by Senator Steineger. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m. The next meeting is scheduled for January 10, 2007.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:30 P.M. on January 9, 2007, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.