

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:35 p.m. on January 29, 2007, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent: Greta Goodwin- excused

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: Senator Laura Kelly
Senator John Vratil
Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association
Robert Vancrum, Blue Valley USD 229
Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards
Stuart J.Little, Shawnee Mission School District 512
Bill Brady, Schools for Fair Funding

Senator Schodorf called the Committee's attention to the minutes of the January 18 and 22 meetings, which were distributed at the January 25 meeting.

Senator Teichman moved to approve the minutes of the January 18 and 22 meetings, seconded by Senator Vratil. The motion carried.

Senator Laura Kelly requested the introduction of a bill which would mandate kindergarten attendance and lower the mandatory age from seven to six.

Senator Steinerger moved to introduce the bill, seconded by Senator Teichman. The motion carried.

SB 68 – School finance; non-proficient pupil weighting

Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office, explained that **SB 68** amends a provision in the school finance law for non-proficient pupil weighting by removing the one-year sunset on the non-proficient at-risk weighting and by simplifying the formula.

Senator John Vratil testified in support of **SB 68**. He explained that non-proficient at-risk weighting applies only to students who do not qualify for free lunch and who have scored below proficiency on state assessment tests. He noted that the primary purpose of the bill was to extend the non-proficient at-risk weighting factor in the school finance formula. He pointed out that the At-Risk Council and the 2010 Commission recommended the continuance of non-proficient at-risk weighting. (Attachment 1)

Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association, testified in support of **SB 68**. He noted that KNEA characterizes at-risk weighting as "free lunch plus." Thus, the use of poverty as a method of funding at-risk programs is appropriate. KNEA also believes that it would be wrong to withdraw funding for special programs to meet the needs of non-proficient at-risk students after one year. (Attachment 2)

Robert Vancrum, representing Blue Valley USD 229, testified in support of **SB 68**. He commented that, by setting aside an additional non-proficient at-risk weighting last year, the Legislature recognized that any student whose math or reading scores are below proficient needs substantial and costly interventions and should qualify for at-risk weighting. He noted that the bill significantly simplified the method for computing this weighting while being revenue neutral. (Attachment 3)

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards, testified in support of **SB 68**. He noted that KASB has

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acknowledged that the use of free lunch counts is not a perfect measure and that factors other than poverty cause academic problems. KASB supports continuation of the non-proficient weighting, which is based on non-free-lunch students who score below proficiency. (Attachment 4)

Stuart Little, representing Shawnee Mission School District 512, testified in support of **SB 68**. He stated that the District supported the provisions of the bill which would clarify the formula for non-proficient at-risk students and make the provision a permanent component of the state's school finance formula. He noted that the proposed new formula should ease the District's burden of determining non-proficient at-risk students. (Attachment 5)

Bill Brady, Schools for Fair Funding, testified in opposition to **SB 68**. He noted that Schools for Fair Funding believes that poverty remains the best indicator for funding at-risk programs and that the major problem with the non-proficient weighting is that it deals with the testing issue after the action has occurred. He commented further that, to his knowledge, there has been no report to the Legislature on how districts are utilizing non-proficient dollars. He suggested that **SB 68** be amended to extend the sunset for two more years to allow time to thoroughly evaluate whether it makes sense to continue the program. (Attachment 6)

There being no others wishing to testify, the hearing on **SB 68** was closed.

Senator Schodorf opened Committee discussion on the following previously heard bills: **SB 22** concerning the administration of the teacher education competitive grant program for postsecondary educational institutions, **SB 23** which would combine the four different teacher service scholarship programs into one plan, and **SB 70** concerning attendance and transportation of pupils who reside outside the district.

Senator Vratil moved to technically amend **SB 22** on page 1, line 18, by striking "matching" and inserting "competitive", seconded by Senator Pine. The motion carried.

Senator Teichman moved to recommend **SB 22** favorably for passage as amended, seconded by Senator Vratil. The motion carried.

Senator Vratil moved to technically amend **SB 23** on page 2, line 43, by striking "\$2,000" and inserting "\$2,500" seconded by Senator Pine. The motion carried.

Senator Teichman moved to recommend **SB 23** favorably for passage as amended, seconded by Senator Vratil. The motion carried.

It was the consensus of the Committee to take no action on **SB 70**.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:20 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 30, 2007.