

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:35 p.m. on January 15, 2008, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent: Senator Barbara Allen
Senator Anthony Hensley

Committee staff present: Sharon Wenger, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Carol Toland, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office
Matt Todd, Revisor of Statutes Office
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Alexa Posny, Commissioner, Kansas Department of Education
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas Department of Education

Introduction of Bills:

Senator Pat Apple requested the introduction of a bill relating to the effect which a natural disaster might have on the student enrollment in a school district. He noted that, after the flooding in eastern and southeastern Kansas in 2007, several school superintendents were uncertain how their budget would be affected by the change in student population. The bill would hold the budgets in those districts harmless for three years. The following school districts would be listed in the bill: Erie, Iola, Osawatomie, Greensburg, Coffeyville, Independence, Neodesha, and Fredonia.

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

Senator John Vratil requested the introduction of a bill which concerned the teacher continuing contract law. He explained that, in 1951, the Legislature first adopted the concept of the continuing contract for teachers which provided that, if the school district does not renew the contract, it automatically continues the next year. In 1974, in conjunction with the adoption of the Professional Negotiations Act, the Legislature adopted another continuing contract law which conflicts with the 1951 law. The older law includes teachers and administrators, superintendents, and supervisors; however, the more recent law does not include administrators, superintendents, and supervisors. The bill would repeal the older continuing contract law.

Senator Vratil moved to introduce the bill, seconded by Senator Apple. The motion carried.

Senator Vratil requested the introduction of a bill concerning a current statute which allows cities and counties to invest idle funds in federal agency securities but does not allow schools to make such investments. The bill would allow school districts to invest idle funds in federal agency securities if they have an investment policy that is approved by the municipal investment board.

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

K-12 Education and Teacher Shortage Issue

Dr. Alexa Posny, Commissioner, Kansas Department of Education, and Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner, Kansas Department of Education, presented a review of the following major challenges facing K-12 education: (1) producing an adequate number of teachers to fill teacher shortages, (2) integrating academic and career-technical programs to meet the needs of postsecondary education and the business community, (3) developing a longitudinal database system in cooperation with the State Board of Regents to provide accountability for the outcomes of both K-12 and postsecondary educational systems, (4) implementing strategies to create and motivate greater student interest in math, engineering, technology, and science to drive our economic engine, and (5) meeting the needs of the increasing disabled and disadvantaged population both with teachers and financial resources. In addition, Dr. Posny and Mr. Dennis summarized the audit findings on teacher shortages prepared by the Legislative Division of Post Audit and a survey on teacher shortages

CONTINUATION SHEET

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conducted June 4, 2007. They pointed out that Kansas ranks 37th in the nation for teacher salaries, and approximately 3,000 teachers leave Kansas schools each year to pursue careers in other states. They also pointed out that Kansas students rank in the top 10 percent for reading and mathematics on the ACT, and 77 percent of graduating seniors go on to postsecondary education. (Attachment 1)

Mr. Dennis briefly summarized a list of Kansas State Board of Education legislative recommendations for fiscal year 2009 as itemized in a pamphlet prepared by the Board in October 2007. He also distributed copies of a booklet entitled, "Education in Kansas 2007-2007 Accountability Report" prepared by the Board in December 2007. Copies of the publications may be obtained at the office of the State Board of Education, 120 SE 10th Avenue, Topeka, Kansas.

Terry Forsyth, Kansas National Education Association, distributed handouts entitled, "Great Teachers for 21st Century Schools" (Attachment 2) and "Alternative Compensation Study Committee Final Report" (Attachment 3).

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for January 16, 2008.