

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE.

The meeting was called to order by Chairperson Senator Barbara Lawrence at 9:00 a.m. on January 31, 2000 in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senator Bleeker - Excused

Committee staff present: Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes
Carolyn Rampey, Legislative Research Department
Jackie Breymeyer, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Diane Gjerstad, Wichita Public Schools
Craig Grant, KNEA
Kevin Harry, USD 501

Others attending: See Attached List

Chairperson Lawrence called the meeting to order and gave a few minutes to Mark Desetti, KNEA. Mr. Desetti made a few comments on the 'Read Across America' program and encouraged legislators to go to the schools at any time to read to the students. KU coach Roy Williams is the honorary chairman, who will promote and encourage reading with the KU athletic department getting in on the fun. After several further comments, Mr. Desetti thanked the committee for its time.

The Chairperson stated the committee would proceed with continuation of the hearing on:

SB 295-Kansas education opportunities certificate pilot program

Diane Gjerstad, Wichita Public Schools, appeared in opposition to the bill and distributed her testimony (Attachment 1) Ms. Gjerstad had several graphs and charts that detailed the performance of private and public schools which she went through with the committee. She stated, in conclusion, that these demonstrated that public schools offer unparalleled choice and strong academic achievement.

Craig Grant, KNEA, presented his testimony in opposition to **SB 295**, stating that his organization has long opposed attempts to take public taxpayer dollars to support private schools in either the form of vouchers or tax credits. Such programs could weaken or destroy the public school system.

The Chairperson asked Mr. Grant whether he knew if the voucher system in Milwaukee or Cleveland had weakened or destroyed the public school system.

Mr. Craig replied that he did not know the answer to that question.

Kevin Harry, USD 501, stated that vouchers would use state money to help students attend private or religious schools. Public schools are getting a bad rap regarding academic achievement and accountability. Actually, public schools are improving in both academic achievement and accountability.

The Chairperson stated the bill will be held and adjourned the meeting.