

MINUTES OF THE SENATE ASSESSMENT AND TAXATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman David Corbin at 10:00 a.m. on February 6, 2004, in Room 519-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Barbara Allen  
Senator Mark Taddiken- excused

Committee staff present:

Chris Courtwright, Legislative Research Department  
Martha Dorsey, Legislative Research Department  
Gordon Self, Revisor of Statutes Office  
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Dr. Ray Daniels, Superintendent, Kansas City Public Schools  
Natalie Bright, Wichita Independent Business Association  
Tom Hawk, Retired school administrator, Manhattan

Others attending:

See Attached List.

**Continued hearing on:**

**SB 403—Schools; school finance; education first plan**

Dr. Ray Daniels, Kansas City Superintendent of Schools, testified in support of **SB 403**. He noted that, although the additional funding provided by the Governor's Education First plan would benefit all Kansas students, it would be particularly significant for students in Wyandotte County which has a large number of children living in poverty and many students learning the English language. He expressed concern that, without additional funding to give those students the same opportunity as their peers, Kansas runs the risk of establishing a two-tiered system of education. He considers the Governor's plan an investment in economic development, which is especially critical for Wyandotte County. Without additional funding, his district will have difficulty meeting QPA and No Child Left Behind requirements. In conclusion, Dr. Daniels noted that many opinion polls indicate that the public supports increased taxes to provide additional dollars to give students a better opportunity for success. (Attachment 1)

Natalie Bright, Wichita Independent Business Association (WIBA), testified in opposition to the proposed tax increases contained in **SB 403**. WIBA supports legislation that encourages consolidation and efficiencies within the state educational system, but it does not support holding K-12 education harmless from budget cuts during a time when the state economic condition is fragile. A survey of WIBA members shows that members believe the proposal will have a negative impact on Wichita's economic recovery and that it will have a disproportionate impact on small businesses. Members believe additional taxes will make it more difficult to keep their employees, to continue to provide benefits, and to keep their doors open. Ms. Bright explained that the WIBA Board of Directors established a K-12 School Finance Committee in 2001 to create a report reflecting a business perspective on the current K-12 funding situation. She called attention to a copy of the committee's final report attached to her written testimony. She noted that the committee began its work before 9/11 and finished it after 9/11. In conclusion, she emphasized that WIBA believes that the best possible education must be provided within budget constraints at a time when additional taxes are not acceptable. (Attachment 2)

Senator Corbin called the Committee's attention to written testimony in opposition to **SB 403** submitted by Terry Holdren, Kansas Farm Bureau. (Attachment 3)

Tom Hawk, a retired school administrator from Manhattan, testified in support of **SB 403**. His written testimony was distributed to the Committee on February 5, and a copy is attached to the minutes of the February 5 meeting. Mr. Hawk discussed the following points in support of increased revenue for Kansas

## CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE SENATE ASSESSMENT AND TAXATION COMMITTEE at 10:00 a.m. on February 6, 2004, in Room 519-S of the Capitol.

education:

- Rural Kansas is facing a serious population decline. Kansas is a rural state and must seriously consider how to support and maintain the towns that have a chance to survive.
- Kansas is losing too many young teachers in the first three to five years of their career. In general, they leave due to low starting salaries and the fact they must earn a graduate degree if they wish to continue progressing in the profession. Many cannot afford the cost to earn a graduate degree.
- To keep people in towns and in Kansas, they must know that the economy has a future. They want good schools with top-notch programs and competent teachers and principals. Working families also want jobs, affordable housing, and a wide variety of supports to raise their children.
- Funding for professional development, flexible school programs, and paraprofessional support is essential in main streaming at-risk and special education students. He noted that costs have skyrocketed for schools just as they have for other businesses. The largest escalating cost relating to recruitment and retention of teachers is health insurance.
- If schools are not supported a suitable level, many schools will be forced to merge, close, or combine administrative structures. Mr. Hawk commented that failure to fairly tax at the state level has not saved the taxpayer at the local level. It has simply moved the taxes to the LOB, and nearly every district in the state has maximized their LOB.

In conclusion, Mr. Hawk said **SB 403** is a reasonable start “to keep the blood supply going to the brain” to keep Kansas schools operating, to keep young teachers, and to keep programs needed for students.

Senator Corbin announced that the hearing on **SB 403** would not be closed, pending receipt of information requested on February 5. With regard to the challenge before the Legislature, he commented that an elementary school principal once said to him, “We are educating the kids today for the jobs of tomorrow for which the technology has not yet been developed.”

Senator Buhler moved to approve the minutes of the February 4, 2004, meeting, seconded by Senator Donovan. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:50 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 9, 2004.