

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:30 p.m. on February 11, 2009, in Room 446-N of the Capitol.

All members were present except:

Senator Anthony Hensley- absent

Committee staff present:

Theresa Kiernan, Office of the Revisor of Statutes

Matt Sterling, Office of the Revisor of Statutes

Martha Dorsey, Kansas Legislative Research Department

Sharon Wenger, Kansas Legislative Research Department

Dorothy Gerhardt, Committee Assistant

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Theresa Kiernan, Office of the Revisor of Statutes

Senator Tim Owens,

Diane Gjerstad, Wichita Public Schools

Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards

Val Defever, Schools for Quality Education

Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association

Diane Lindeman, Director of Student Financial Assistance, Kansas Board of Regents

Casondra L. Lee

Others attending:

See attached list.

Hearing on SB 130 - Schools; school terms, holidays and in-service training

Chairperson Schodorf announced that, per the request of Senator Owens, a formal hearing on **SB 130** would not be held at this time but that an informal discussion regarding the concept would be held.

Theresa Kiernan, Office of the Revisor of Statutes, presented a brief summary of the legislation. The bill would amend a provision in current law that sets by statute the minimum length of the school term. The bill would say the state board of education would adopt regulation that would set the term. It could commence so soon as the day after Labor Day and could end no later than the day before Memorial Day. The bill would prohibit having in-service or staff development during regularly scheduled school hours, but they could have those in-service or staff development days before Labor Day or after Memorial Day.

Senator Tim Owens (Attachment 1) began the discussion stating he had received a variety of comments from a variety of persons regarding their concerns that school districts tend to schedule without concern for things like the business community, parents' schedules, and teacher in-service days interfering with school days. He has also heard concern from teachers that in-service and staff development days are a waste of their time and they spend much of that time grading papers or accomplishing other tasks they might not get to in the classroom. It is his opinion that if the provisions of **SB 130** were implemented, the concerns of parents, teachers, business owners and students would be addressed. He feels it would be far more accommodating to every community if there was consistency across the state on attendance dates, in-service policies, and vacation dates.

Senator Vratil commented he felt attention should be given to the possibility of year-round school which would give students the maximum time in the classroom for learning as well as making maximum use of the investment in property. Senator Steineger stated he agreed with both senators from Johnson County and felt we had a huge capital investment, both physical and intellectual, tied up in a system that only functions 40 hours a week, 9 months a year. He felt the whole school calendar should be looked at in an effort to get away from the notion of the school calendar being based on the old agrarian summer where all the kids had to take the summer off to work on the farm.

Senator Abrams stated he felt this should be left to local communities and cited Dexter going to four days a week. Senator Teichman stated school districts are individual and need flexibility in scheduling to meet the

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needs of the community. She also stated schools in her district are used almost every day year round and are the center of activity in the community, not just the 40 hours a week, 9 months a year.

Diane Gjerstad, Wichita Public Schools, ([Attachment 2](#)) Mark Tallman, Kansas Association of School Boards, ([Attachment 3](#)) Val Defever, Schools for Quality Education, ([Attachment 4](#)) and Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association, ([Attachment 5](#)) all spoke in opposition to the bill. They each felt local schools needed to maintain control over the calendar as well as scheduling of in-service and staff development time. It is their opinion that staff development must be done in increments throughout the school year to be most effective and not either before or after the school year.

Barbara Bunting, Newton, KASB, and Pam Robertson, KASB, each spoke in opposition to the proposed legislation. They feel it is a local control issue and also feel staff development must be done throughout the school year.

The hearing on **SB 130** was closed.

Hearing on SB 150 - Postsecondary education; KPERS eligible educational program act

Theresa Kiernan, Office of the Revisor of Statutes, presented a brief summary of the legislation. The bill would establish an educational program for qualified students. A qualifier would be identified as an employee who has been a member of KPERS for at least 10 consecutive years and who has not received an unsatisfactory performance evaluation, a retirant vested in KPERS without an unsatisfactory performance evaluation, or a spouse, child, grandchild, or stepchild who has academically qualified. The maximum amount of the scholarship would be \$2,500 each semester for four years, unless a program required five years for completion.

Senator Abrams, sponsor of the legislation, stated he understood this legislation was going nowhere but wanted to start the discussion. He feels such legislation would encourage longevity in employment for parents and also would provide something for the children.

Diane Lindeman, Director of Student Financial Assistance, Kansas Board of Regents, ([Attachment 6](#)) provided testimony on the proposed legislation. Her testimony included information on the estimated costs involved in implementing the program. Casandra L. Lee ([Attachment 7](#)), a parent, provided testimony from a parental, as well as a KPERS employee, viewpoint in support of the legislation.

The hearing on **SB 150** was closed.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 12, 2009.

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