

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:35 p.m. on February 16, 2006, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent:

Committee staff present: Deb Hollon, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Senator Dennis Wilson
Kevin Shepard, Tri-County Special Education Interlocal No.
607
Mark Desetti, Kansas National Education Association
(KNEA)

Senator Schodorf called attention to copies of the minutes of the January 31, February 1, and February 2 meetings.

Senator Teichman moved to approve the minutes of the January 31, February 1, and February 2 meetings, seconded by Senator Ostmeyer. The motion carried.

SB 566—Teachers; enacting the Teacher Education Grant Program Act

Deb Hollon, Kansas Legislative Research Department, explained that **SB 566** was based primarily on other teacher service scholarships and that the program would award grants to Kansas residents who were either a licenced teacher enrolled in a program leading to a Masters Degree or persons with an associates degree enrolled in a program leading to licensure as a special education teacher. The amount of the grant would not be more than 100 percent of the cost of attendance at the state university where the student is enrolled or 100 percent of the average amount of the cost of attendance across the state universities if the student is enrolled at an independent university or at Washburn University. There would be service obligations with this program. The student would have to complete the course of study, teach on a full-time basis in Kansas for not less than ten years, or teach on a part-time basis in Kansas for a period of time that equates to ten years of full time. The student would have to begin teaching within six months after licensure. If the service obligation is not met, the student must repay the amount they received plus interest. Administration of the program would be within the Department of Education as opposed to the Board the Regents where some of the other service scholarships are. The student would apply through the Board of Regents, and the Board would determine the student's eligibility and forward the application to the Department of Education. The bill creates two funds to handle the repayment requirements if the individual does not fulfill the obligations.

Senator Dennis Wilson, testified in support of **SB 566**, which he co-authored with Senator Derek Schmidt. He explained that the purpose of the bill was to provide an incentive for teachers to stay in the Kansas school system. He noted that there would be no grants offered for a Ph.D. He pointed out that the bill provided for postponement of payback or completion of the degree due to a medical disability or active military service. (Attachment 1)

With regard to concerns about the fiscal note on the bill, Senator Wilson commented, "We're talking about trying get money directly into the classroom. I don't know of a better way of the citizens in this state seeing money in the classroom by helping the teacher. It's very expensive to get a Masters Degree, and a lot of these teachers won't take the time because they don't have the money to do so. They want to stay in their chosen field, but it's very expensive. We think that you ought to carve out some of the \$400 million, or whatever you are going to give in this next program, to put into this grant program and administer it. I want you to understand, I'm going to be very curious how they craft this note. Obviously, we have a lot of teachers in the system now at the age that will not go back, so they can't include them, and they shouldn't. I'd imagine that there are a lot of teachers already with their Masters so you're loping off that end. So we're catching everybody in between. What I really want to identify, and I don't think they will be able to quantify it, is how

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:35 p.m. on February 16, 2006, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

many good teachers will we be able to attract because of this program—that are just now getting ready to formulate what they’re going to do when they graduate from college.”

Kevin Shepard, Director of the Tri-County Special Education Interlocal No. 607, testified in support of **SB 566**. He noted that, due to the increasing number of teacher shortages in a variety of fields, the state is experiencing a major hurdle in sustaining Kansas students’ top national rating for their academic performance. He pointed out that it was essential to hire and retain “highly qualified” staff to address the expectations of recent unfunded mandates (No Child Left Behind and reauthorization of the Individuals with Disability Education Act). He emphasized that, due to competition from a number of out-of-state recruiters who offer bonus packages and incentives, it has become very difficult to recruit special education teachers for critical vacancies in Kansas. In addition, he noted that the attrition rate among new educators is high, and the impact of the imminent retirement of teachers now 50 years of age or older will create an enormous shortfall of teachers that cannot be addressed with the current number of candidates available through Kansas universities. He contended that **SB 566** had a tremendous potential to help address the teacher shortage crisis because the potential pool of candidates would be greatly enhanced, and additionally, paraeducators would be given a chance to complete a teaching degree through utilization of this incentive. (Attachment 2) For the Committee’s information, Mr. Shepard distributed tables relating to teacher vacancies, special education endorsements, new teacher retention, certification waivers, and the Kansas State Board of Education’s alternative routes to licensure. (Attachment 3)

Mark Desetti, KNEA, testified in support of **SB 566**, noting that its provisions could be classified as both a “grow your own” and a “meet your needs” approach. He acknowledged that the bill could help school districts meet specialized needs under No Child Left Behind and the Kansas licensing system. However, he was concerned that scholarship recipients would be required to commit to ten years of teaching, which is the longest commitment proposed in the last eight legislative sessions. He questioned what would happen in cases wherein a scholarship recipient was laid off due to declining enrollment before fulfilling their ten-year obligation. He noted that the fiscal note, which had not yet been prepared, might simply be too much. (Attachment 4) In concluding his testimony, he added, “We’ve made the point along with KASB that we believe 69 percent of Kansas dollars are already getting into the classroom through the three areas of instruction, student support and instructional structural support. Where this program would fall in the NCES categories is anybody’s guess. Whether that’s instructional support or student support, we don’t know where it would be. And, of course, we would be remiss not to remind you of other ways to address teacher shortage. For example, salaries, health benefits, new teacher support programs to reduce attrition rate, and professional development programs for those that have a few years in and want to improve their performance. We do think that those are also critically important in addressing the teacher shortages.”

Senator Wilson responded to questions from the Committee.

There being no others wishing to testify, the hearing on **SB 566** was closed.

For the Committee’s information, two memorandums from the Kansas Board of Regents were distributed. The memorandums concerned data requested by Senator Lee at a previous meeting. The first memorandum regarded technical institution funding. (Attachment 5) The second memorandum regarded FY 2006 tuition rate ranges. (Attachment 6)

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for February 20, 2006.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate Education Committee at 1:35 p.m. on February 16, 2006, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.