

House and Senate budget committees finalize finance bills

The Senate Ways and Means Committee worked until 9:45 last night, the House Appropriations Committee until 10:45, assembling their school finance bills. Both committees worked like Dr. Frankenstein sewing together cuts, money shifts, policy changes, and finance provisions in the attempt. We'll review here where the two bills are.

The first thing for you to understand is that the bill numbers have changed. The House put their plan in a Senate bill while the Senate put theirs in a House bill. This is a common procedural move. This way, if the House passes their bill, the Senate would have the opportunity to debate it but could not amend it - the motion on the floor would be simply to concur or non-concur in the House changes to the Senate bill.

Since the two bills are different, what is most likely to happen is that, if the bills pass their own chambers, they will both non-concur in the other chambers bill and form a conference committee to work out the differences and arrive at a final product to be considered by both.

Let's start with what's the same in both bills.

LOB and Capital Outlay equalization are fully funded in both bills.

Both allow a new resolution on capital outlay to be adopted so that these funds can be used for additional purposes.

Both limit regular at-risk weighting to full time students age 19 and under. Kindergarteners and students with IEPs are exceptions. This change cuts regular at-risk aid by \$3.5 million.

Both change high-density at-risk by starting the linear transition at 45% poverty (currently 35%) and full high density at 55% poverty (currently 50%). This change cuts high-density at-risk aid by \$7.2 million.

Both completely eliminate non-proficient at-risk funding. This change cuts at-risk aid

by \$4.9 million.

Both eliminate new facilities weighting starting in 2015 except for projects in their second year. This cuts \$10 million.

The House reduces virtual schools weighting from 105% of BSAPP to 90% of BSAPP and caps the age of students funded at 19. We do not yet have confirmation on how many dollars this would cut.

Both change teacher licensure by allowing districts to hire untrained teachers for career and technical education, math, and science.

On the local option budget, while both bills increase LOB to 33%, the House bill requires a mail ballot election for any amount over 30% while the Senate bill allows those already at 31% to go to 32% or 33% without an election.

Provisions from the House Appropriations Committee; Sub for SB 218

The House changes the statutory base state aid per pupil from the current \$4492 to "at least \$3838."

The House specifically identifies all sources of revenue that count for school funding.

The House keeps the current transportation formula but funds it at 95%. This cuts transportation aid by \$5.1 million.

The House repeals the education goals currently in statute which are similar to the Rose standards cited by the Supreme Court and replaces them with the actual Rose standards.

The House requires school districts to notify teachers that they are covered by the tort claims act.

The House increases the cap on so-called "innovative" districts from 10% of districts to 20% while requiring the second 10% to be from districts with Title I priority or focus schools.

The House requires that school districts prepare a one-page summary of the budget and have it available at any meeting where budget or finance issues are discussed.

The House establishes a study commission on performance and efficiency to find more efficient ways to spend money in schools.

Provisions from the Senate Ways and Means Committee; Sub for HB 2506

The Senate adopts the LPA transportation formula. This cuts transportation aid by \$16.5 million.

The Senate reduces virtual schools weighting from 105% of BSAPP to 90% of BSAPP full time students and 70% for part time students. We do not yet have confirmation on how many dollars this would cut.

The Senate establishes a study commission to examine the Rose standards, the finance formula, and efficiencies.

The Senate provides a property tax credit for families of non-public school students. The credit is \$1000 per child; \$2500 per family.

The Senate included the "SUCCESS Act" establishing integrated CTE programs from high school through post-secondary school.

KNEA opposes both bills

KNEA believes that both bills are inappropriate responses to the Gannon decision. While we acknowledge that both bills fund the equity provisions specifically identified by the Supreme Court, they do so by making cuts to transportation aid, virtual schools weighting, and funding programs designed to meet the needs of at-risk students. This action not only puts additional stress on school district efforts to address special challenges and reduce the achievement gap.

Since the lower court has been charged with making a determination regarding the adequacy of state funding for public education, reductions in these important programs will only compromise the state's argument that funding is currently adequate. Additionally, some of these provisions - the current level of regular at-risk funding and high-density at-risk funding were put in place in response to the Montoy decision of 2005.

KNEA also opposes policy changes included in these bills. The provision allowing

districts to hire teachers with absolutely no pedagogical training is offensive to practicing educators. While content knowledge is critical, the skills necessary for meeting the diverse learning needs and styles of students is just as critical. Without any pedagogical training, how can a teacher be expected to understand how to convey content to reluctant or unmotivated students, to ELL students who struggle with English, to developmentally delayed or physically challenged students, to gifted students, to learning disabled students? One does not address a teacher shortage by lowering standards for entry in the profession any more than one would address a shortage of dentists in rural Kansas by allowing hygienists to perform root canals.

KNEA opposes the expansion of the innovative schools program for a number of reasons. First, there is doubt about the constitutionality of the program. The State Board of Education has requested an Attorney General's opinion on this. The current cap of 10% would allow for 28 districts yet only eight have applied for innovative status. Since this experimental program has not even begun, it is wrong to expand the program before there is any evidence that it is successful.

Finally, KNEA opposes the property tax credit for non-public school students. This is simply another attempt at a voucher program meant to undermine public education.

KNEA believes that the legislature should pass a clean school finance bill that addresses only the equity issues identified by the Supreme Court. The budget process is not the place to consider policy changes that were not vetted by the education committees.

Take Action NOW!

First, join the chorus of Kansas calling for a clean school funding bill! Add your name to the online petition at <http://changekansas.org/action/petition/pass-a-clean-education-budget-bill-now>^[1].

Contact your legislators today and urge them to vote NO on Sub for SB 218 and Sub for HB 2506. Go back to the drawing board and pass a clean school finance bill addressing only the equity issues identified by the Supreme Court. Use the KNEA legislative contact portal by clicking here^[2].

1. <http://click.email.nea.org/>

qs=51abb43052f10018dedd393d5da7a8a8d776fbacdd1d8218500077e6dbe37054d638dad49cb1386e

2. <http://click.email.nea.org/>?

qs=51abb43052f10018769770cf3a701cb5eaab594dd8adefd1e900d3abd8a07b7ad2e4b8496424f78b