

Efficiency Commission considers further marginalization of teachers

Anti-collective bargaining proposal so far lacks enough support

The K-12 Performance and Efficiency Commission met yesterday to consider a number of proposed draft bills. Most of the bills would have established study groups to provide more recommendations on school administrative reorganization, cost sharing, efficiency audits of school districts, the use of unencumbered balances, and how to measure the Rose Standards. But one bill stood out for its surprise appearance on the agenda.

This proposal would essentially end collective bargaining for teachers. While it appeared to allow negotiations on salary and hours, it would have prohibited school districts from negotiating on any other topics. Under questioning from Senator Vratil, it was noted that the bill as drafted would have made salaries and hours "permissive" items (you can negotiate them only if the board of education wants to). Since school boards generally won't negotiate permissive items, the bill as drafted would essentially end collective bargaining.

This issue had come before the Commission before but it had been decided that any changes to collective bargaining should come from on-going conversations between KNEA, KASB, and USA. In fact, the draft Commission recommendations at the end of the September meeting said this specifically. It applauded those efforts and encouraged them to continue:

"The Commission acknowledges and appreciates the Kansas Association of School Boards working with various stakeholders in discussions of potential changes in the Professional Negotiations Act. The Commission approves and supports this process and looks forward to a successful conclusion." **K-12 Student Performance and Efficiency Commission**

Recommendations September 18-19, 2014^[1]

Yet when the draft report was put before the Commission yesterday, the above recommendation was missing. In its place was the proposed anti-collective bargaining legislation.

Chairman Sam Williams was challenged on where this bill came from and why it was

here given the earlier recommendation. His response was that this was a way to make sure the three organizations would come to agreement. Essentially, the idea is to hold a gun to the head of one of the negotiators (KNEA) to let them know that if they won't agree on the KASB or USA positions entirely, this Commission would ask the legislature to end collective bargaining.

The idea - both of making a proposal prior to the completion of negotiations among the groups and the radical extent of the bill as drafted - did not sit well with a majority of the Commissioners. The proposal was not adopted. What was not clear at the end of meeting was whether Williams was asking the Revisor of Statutes to craft a new anti-bargaining bill or if this was the end of the discussion with the Commission deferring to KNEA/USA/KASB negotiators to resolve any conflicts.

The Commission meets again on January 6. The issue may be revived then.

So what about "transparency?"

Sam Williams, Dave Trabert, and others are very fond of making broad statements about the lack of transparency in reporting on finances by school districts. They like to imply that school districts and superintendents are trying to hide financial information from policy makers. They even talked this time about superintendents running their own little "dynasties."

So what about transparency?

School districts work under a vast array of legislatively mandated reporting requirements. Budget information is available to all members of the public in a variety of forms from one-page summaries to budget-at-a-glance booklets to the full budget. There are mandatory public hearings, requirements for electronic posting, even a requirement to have the documents readily available at every board meeting.

Transparency in government is a good thing. That's exactly why all those budget reporting requirements exist. That's why we have an open meetings act and an open records act. It is part and parcel of protests over the school finance bill, HB 2506, much of which was adopted with no public hearings in the dead of night.

So shouldn't all governmental groups be "transparent?" What about the K-12 Performance and Efficiency Commission? Is someone going to tell the public how it

came about that the collective bargaining recommendation encouraging the KNEA/USA/KASB negotiations to proceed was mysteriously deleted and replaced with an anti-collective bargaining bill draft?

Or is transparency optional?

No final decisions...yet

After a long day of discussion over six legislative proposals, nothing was finally adopted. Three of the study commissions appear to have been dropped entirely (consolidation of administrative services, the unencumbered cash balance study, and the administrative reorganization study), others may be revised and brought back in January.

Next meeting and final decisions are expected on January 6, 2015.

1. [http://click.email.nea.org/?](http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=68861d1e10181c4306cca4497d961108dae80d5d1176247d5c975a4e78e5c5b71e6c670a7c9e4048)

[qs=68861d1e10181c4306cca4497d961108dae80d5d1176247d5c975a4e78e5c5b71e6c670a7c9e4048](http://click.email.nea.org/?qs=68861d1e10181c4306cca4497d961108dae80d5d1176247d5c975a4e78e5c5b71e6c670a7c9e4048)