

House Commerce hears bill to dismantle collective bargaining

Yet another bill in the House to diminish collective bargaining for teachers (HB 2326) had a hearing today, this time in the House Commerce Committee.

The Education Community - KNEA, KASB, USA/KS, and KSSA - testified jointly in opposition to the bill asking legislators once again to adopt the bill that all four groups worked collaboratively to create. (HB 2257)

Here's one of the most interesting things to think about in this discussion. At the end of 2013 legislative session, the House Commerce Committee asked the four organizations to get together and determine the best changes to make to the PNA. The four organizations took up the challenge and spent 18 months working with their members and then negotiating changes that satisfied each group. They had a bill drawn up and introduced in both the House and the Senate. The four groups all oppose any other legislation changing PNA. And yet the one bill that can't get a hearing in the House is the one supported by educators.

Instead, the House Education Committee passed out Dave Trabert's bill to essentially end collective bargaining for anything other than salaries. Now the House Commerce Committee appears enthusiastic about a bill that ends bargaining units, severely restricts what can be negotiated, and would require school districts to negotiate with any individual teacher or group of teachers that wanted their own deal. Supporting this bill was Ken Willard, chair of the Governor's Efficiency Task Force of several years ago. Imagine if you will how efficient it would be for school districts to be required to individually negotiate with any individual or any group who asked!

State Board member Steve Roberts pitched the bill as a way to get more money to STEM teachers. Asked if it would increase salaries for all teachers, Roberts said he didn't know "the effect on Kindergarten teachers who specialize in finger painting," but it would certainly help the high school STEM teachers.

Mark Tallman of KASB, testifying for the educators, pointed out that the bill would create a very inefficient system and severely restrict local control for school districts. Asked if this wouldn't help to raise teacher salaries, Tallman told the Committee that it would not

in that districts had a defined amount of funding. If salaries for some teacher were increased, it would come at the expense of other teachers.

We would remind the Legislature that they asked the education community to craft changes to PNA, the education community fulfilled that request, and perhaps it is time to listen to the educators and set aside proposals by anti-public education lobbyists like Dave Trabert.

The good bill crafted the education Community has had a hearing in the Senate Education Committee (SB 136) but has not been passed out of committee. Instead that Committee will hold a hearing on a bill that ends collective bargaining on everything except minimum salaries (SB 176) on Monday.

House Ed passes bill mandating sex ed programs be opt-in

We reported on the hearing on HB 2199. Because one school in one school district used materials from the adopted sex ed curriculum that a parent found offensive, all school districts would be mandated to secure written permission for a student to participate in the sex education program.

The Committee debated the bill hotly today and passed it out with comments including, "Do you want your children told it's okay to be gay!"

The bill now goes to the House floor for consideration.

House Ed Budget adopts a K-12 budget

The House Education Budget Committee met today to craft their recommendations on K-12 funding for presentation to the full House Appropriations Committee.

Rep. Barbara Bollier suggested that they approve the Governor's budget amounts but use the current formula to distribute the funds since there has been no block grant bill brought forward.

The Committee, assured by Chair Amanda Grosserode that the block grant bill would be coming soon, rejected Bollier's idea and decided to wait for the block grant bill.

Rep. Peck brought forth a list of Department of Education positions and salaries and

suggested that the Committee look at reducing salary expenditures at the Department. There was much back and forth over this with the Chair saying she was not comfortable doing this without a hearing that would allow the Department to talk about the various positions and responsibilities.

Eventually Rep. Jerry Henry suggested that it was not a good use of time to be making budgeting decisions that would likely have to be undone once the block grant bill surfaced. He suggested the Committee simply adopt the Governor's money recommendations and then reconsider the whole budget in light of the block grant bill.

The Committee approved that suggestion and adjourned. They will meet on call of the Chair next week.

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