

More movement on PNA today

The Senate Education Committee worked the PNA bills that had hearings in the Committee. SB 136 is the bill crafted by the education community (KASB, KNEA, USA-KS, KSSA) while SB 176 is the bill that essentially ends collective bargaining.

Discussion started with a motion to pass SB 136. Sen. Fitzgerald amended the bill by making it a virtual match for Dave Trabert's bill, HB 2034. A motion to pass the amended bill out of committee failed. Senator Caryn Tyson was asking for clarification on what the bill and amendments now did. She argued that she did not believe teachers should be taken out of the negotiations process.

The Committee recessed to allow members to more closely examine the bill. On a motion by Sen. Tyson, the committee voted to reconsider their action killing the bill. Sen. Hensley pointed out that as amended, the bill would create more conflict between boards and teachers as each side could block the other by refusing to agree to negotiate a topic.

A new vote was taken on moving the amended bill forward. This time the bill passed on a 6-5 vote with Hensley, Pettey, Schmidt, Kerschen, and Baumgardner voting NO.

There appears to remain some confusion among the Committee members about what actually passed and what its impact might be. We would suggest that the issue remains somewhat fluid and there may be attempts to further amend the bill.

As it sits now, the Committee essentially voted in favor of Dave Trabert's so-called "minority report" bill. Adoption of this amended bill represents one more time that legislators - who called upon the education community to craft changes to the PNA - chose to ignore the entire education community in favor of a proposal from anti-education lobbyist Dave Trabert.

Repealing in-state tuition provisions

The House Education Committee held a hearing today on **HB 2139**, a bill sponsored by Rep. Rubin to repeal provisions in law allowing the children of undocumented workers to benefit from in-state tuition rates and Kansas post-secondary education institutions.

Rubin and Secretary of State Kris Kobach testified in favor of the bill saying that it is contrary to federal law and rewards illegal behavior. Several other proponents complained of unfair treatment for kids from other states or the Obama administrations immigration policy.

Opponents of the bill included the Kansas Board of Regents, League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), KNEA, KASB, religious leaders and a number of students now attending colleges and using the in-state tuition rates.

The Kansas policy on in-state tuition for these students requires that they have lived in Kansas for at least three years, graduated from a Kansas high school and sign an affidavit indicating they will seek legal status as soon as they are eligible to do so. It has been in effective for 11 years and over 600 students now take advantage of the policy. There have been many attempts to repeal the law over the years but none have succeeded.

In testimony before the Committee, KNEA said, "We urge you to continue to reward these high achieving, hard-working students for a job well done. It's not about how their parents came here; it's about what those kids did once they got here."

No action was taken on the bill today.

Senate advances bill that would censor teaching materials

The full Senate this afternoon advanced **SB 56**, a bill that removes the "affirmative defense" for K-12 teachers in Kansas.

This bill would permit teachers to be hauled before a grand jury if a parent complains that materials used in class are inappropriate. The teacher could not use as a defense that the material was part of the adopted curriculum and had educational merit. If this bill becomes law, schools and teachers would very likely self-censor their lessons and materials, blocking from use anything that some individual parent might find offensive. Art history teachers, for example, will think twice about displaying the Statue of David or other works of art that display nudity.

It's not that the teacher would necessarily be convicted of a crime but simply that schools would have to deal with expensive legal procedures every time a parent had an objection to some material used in class.

The bill will be subject to a second vote on the Senate floor tomorrow. If passed, it will go the House for consideration.

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