

Ways & Means considers LOB aid cut

The Senate Ways and Means Committee held a hearing on **Senate Bill 71**, a bill that would change the way LOB state aid is calculated and reduce LOB funding to schools by more than \$39 million.

Here's how Budget Director Shawn Sullivan explains the bill in a report to Committee Chair Ty Masterson:

Under current law, the amount of state aid that a school district is entitled for its Local Option Budget (LOB) is based on its assessed valuation per pupil (AVPP) and what the statewide AVPP is at the 81.2 percentile. If a district's AVPP is above the 81.2 percentile, the district receives no LOB State Aid, also known as Supplemental General State Aid. If a district's AVPP is below the 81.2 percentile, the district is entitled to LOB State Aid, based on how far the district's AVPP is from the 81.2 percentile. SB 71 would change the calculation of LOB State Aid from using the 81.2 percentile to using the district with the highest total valuation of taxable tangible property for the preceding year.

LOB State Aid expenditures totaling \$482,755,000 from the State General Fund have been included in The FY 2016 Governor's Budget Report. According to the Kansas Department of Education, enactment of SB 71 would reduce LOB State Aid expenditures by \$39,098,023.

The Committee room was packed with parents and public school employees testifying in opposition to the bill. It comes on the heels of the last Supreme Court ruling that found the legislature unconstitutionally underfunded equity provisions (LOB and Capital Outlay) in the school finance formula. The Legislature last year boosted those aid payments to address the court ruling.

Senator Anthony Hensley (D-Topeka) blasted the proposal as "flying the face of Gannon." Passage of the bill would almost certainly put the state in jeopardy in the ongoing school finance litigation.

Senate Education Committee working bills

The Senate Education Committee was set to work **Senate Bill 2**, a bill allowing school districts to offer teachers two or three-year contracts based on their number of years of experience.

The bill had been introduced by Senator Jake LaTurner (R-Pittsburg) at the request of constituents.

During the hearing, KNEA and KASB both testified as neutral on the bill raising a number of concerns about how it might be implemented and what the impact might be on morale.

The committee today chose to take no action on the bill.

The committee then took up **Senate Bill 32** from the Efficiency Commission. This bill would require annual efficiency audits of school districts and set up a commission to determine efficiency standards. The committee first amended the bill to ensure that the minority party had representation on the commission. Then, when it appeared the bill was moving along, Sen. Tyson asked about the \$2.8 million fiscal note. In the discussion, it was determined that funding the audits was based on a demand transfer - something the legislature often does not do.

Sen. Schmidt noted that if the demand transfer did not get made, then school districts would have to pay for the audits out of their budgets. The bill was pulled back and an amendment will be drawn up that ensures school districts will not have to conduct the audits if the state does not foot the bill.

Finally, they took up **Senate Bill 33** which sets up a Commission to set standards aligned with the Rose Capacities. This bill also came from the Efficiency Commission.

Senator Abrams immediately indicated his discomfort with the bill noting that it appeared to interfere with the State Board of Education's constitutional responsibility for the general supervision of schools. Senators Schmidt and Pettey agreed with Abrams position and it was decided to let the bill lie on the agenda in case they should decide to take it up at a later time.

PNA hearing tomorrow

The House Education Committee will hold a hearing tomorrow on **House Bill 2034**, the minority report bill that would gut collective bargaining rights.

The bill came from a minority of members of the K-12 Efficiency Commission. The majority recommended no changes in PNA pending the completion of on-going talks among education groups to find ways to make collective bargaining more efficient, effective, and focused.

Those talks concluded on January 21 with an agreement signed onto by KNEA, KASB, USA-KS, and KSSA. A bill reflecting the agreement has been introduced in the Senate Education Committee.

All four organizations will testify in opposition to HB 2034 tomorrow and ask the Committee to instead adopt their recommendations.

Bi-partisan bill to restore teacher due process introduced

Rep. Brandon Whipple (D-Wichita) introduced a bill that would restore due process rights to teachers. These rights were stripped in dead of night legislative maneuvering last April.

The bill is not yet printed but will be **House Bill 2220**.

When it is available we will have the names of co-sponsors to share with you. Several Republican legislators made a point of telling us today that they had signed on as co-sponsors.

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