

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Thursday, January 14, 2016

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Nonini, Patrick, Souza, Den Hartog, Anthon, Buckner-Webb and Ward-Engelking

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Mortimer** called the Education Committee (Committee) meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Chairman Mortimer passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Thayn and was excused to attend the Economic Development meeting. **Vice Chairman Thayn** explained to the committee the process of rule making.

DOCKET NO. 08-0109-1501: **Tracie Bent**, Chief Planning and Policy Officer, State Board of Education (Board), presented **Docket No. 08-0109-1501**, Rules Governing the GEAR UP Idaho Scholarship Program. She explained the GEAR UP Scholarship is a program that began a number of years ago as a partnership with the federal government. She discussed the availability of the money to Idaho students. **Ms. Bent** indicated there are unused funds in the program, and this is a result of eligibility and timing issues. The changes to the rule will allow students to have more time to access the grant funds.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Anthon** asked for clarification of the timing regarding the term "next academic year." **Ms. Bent** explained the terminology as the year immediately following.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked how many more years of federal funds are still available in the program. **Ms. Bent** replied the funds were part of a grant that ended but this rule refers to the expenditure of the funds which have been set aside to be used specifically for those scholarship applicants. **Vice Chairman Thayn** asked if this rule will go away when the funds are spent. **Ms. Bent** replied in the affirmative.

MOTION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to accept **Docket No. 08-0109-1501**. **Senator Souza** seconded the motion. Motion passed by **voice vote**.

DOCKET NO 08-0113-1501: **Ms. Bent** presented **Docket No. 08-0113-1501**, Rules Governing the Opportunity Scholarship Program. She explained that the proposed changes would make technical corrections and clarify the eligibility and application requirements for the scholarship applicants. Technical corrections include: 1.) specify the grade point average (GPA) used is cumulative and unweighted and 2.) authorize the Board's executive director to establish the policies and procedures to award the scholarships. **Ms. Bent** emphasized the these changes to the rule will allow for the executive director to have more discretion in administrating the rule.

DISCUSSION: **Senator Nonini** asked if the term "executive director" refers to the State Board of Education's executive director. **Ms. Bent** replied in the affirmative.

Senator Ward-Engelking stated that using the unweighted GPA for this scholarship would discourage students from taking advanced placement (AP) classes. She asked if the Board had considered that situation when adding the word "unweighted" to the rule. **Ms. Bent** replied the Board has used the unweighted GPA in determining scholarship eligibility and explained in detail the Board's reasons for doing so. She said the Board is also adding to the rule the current practice it uses to determine scholarship recipients.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked if the eligibility requirement discourages students from taking harder classes. **Ms. Bent** said they did not have that information. She explained the Board relies heavily on the school districts for determining and reporting GPAs. She explained the Board uses a 4.0 scale because there is no consistent definition statewide on how to calculate GPAs.

Senator Anthon referred to section 0202.01 and asked why in one place the term "Board" is stricken and replaced with "Executive Director" and not changed in another place in the same paragraph. **Ms. Bent** replied that it was an oversight and will be addressed the next time there are amendments to that section.

Senator Buckner-Webb asked if a student with a weighted GPA such as a 4.2 would be considered for the scholarship over a student with a weighted GPA of 4.0. **Ms. Bent** indicated that 70 percent of the scholarship is determined by need. Students are not penalized for taking the harder classes and they are not given the additional credit. She expressed that the Board would be interested in looking at a better way but because not all schools offer AP classes, this is the best solution.

Senator Ward-Engelking stated the weighted and unweighted grades should be reviewed. **Ms. Bent** said the Board understands her request and will look into making revisions as they evaluate this scholarship's progress.

Senator Souza asked how many districts in the state are weighted or unweighted. **Ms. Bent** said that the Board is not aware of which districts use weighted or unweighted GPAs. She stated in all the time this scholarship has been administered it has not used weighted GPAs. She reiterated that there is no consistency in GPA determination across districts in the state.

Senator Anthon asked if the Opportunity Scholarship and Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are two different scholarship applications. He wondered if the wording errors in Section 202.01 would cause ambiguity as to who was to create the application. **Ms. Bent** replied in the negative. She explained the students and counselors understand the different scholarship forms, how to fill them out and mail them in for completion.

Vice Chairman Thayn explained that the scholarship forms are something that guidance counselors are familiar with and he does not think they see the wording as ambiguous.

TESTIMONY: **Dr. Troy Rohn**, Board of Trustees Member, Boise School District, stated that he and the organization that he represents are opposed to adding the term "unweighted GPA to the rule.

MOTION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to accept **Docket No. 08-0113-1501** except for sections 010.01 and 101.02a. **Senator Nonini** seconded the motion.

SUBSTITUTE MOTION: **Senator Anthon** moved to accept **Docket No. 08-0113-1501** except for sections 010.01, 101.02a and 202.01. **Senator Souza** seconded the motion.

Vice Chairman Thayn clarified that to reject section 202.01 would return that section to the original text and would not correct the issue Senator Anthon has with the wording.

Senator Anthon withdrew the motion.

VOTE: The original motion to accept **Docket No. 08-0113-1501** except for sections 010.01 and 101.02a passed by **voice vote**.

DOCKET NO. 08-0201-1501: **Ms. Bent** presented **Docket No. 08-0201-1501**, Rules Governing Administration. She explained the changes amend language specifying that the High School Equivalency Certificate requests go to the Idaho Division of Professional-Technical Education. Additionally, the "cut scores" are being removed, allowing the scoring rubric and passing requirement established by the GED Testing Service to be used for the High School Equivalency Certificate in order to align with the new assessment. She specified the changes also address how test takers obtain records or copies of transcripts.

MOTION: **Senator Anthon** moved to accept **Docket No. 08-0201-1501**. **Senator Buckner-Webb** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

DOCKET NO. 08-0201-1502: **Ms. Bent** presented **Docket No. 08-0201-1502** Rules Governing Administration. She said the changes reflect the wording edits made during the 2015 Legislature: The term "strategic planning" was changed to "continuous improvement planning."

MOTION: **Senator Souza** moved to accept **Docket No. 08-0201-1502**. **Senator Buckner-Webb** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

DOCKET NO. 08-0203-1505: **Ms. Bent** presented **Docket No. 08-0203-1505**, Rules Governing Thoroughness. She stated the changes would bring the definition of "advanced opportunities" into alignment with the program the Idaho public postsecondary institutions offer. It will also replace "Tech Prep" with "Technical Competency Credit."

MOTION: **Senator Nonini** moved to accept **Docket No. 08-0203-1505**. **Senator Anthon** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business at this time, **Vice Chairman Thayn** adjourned the meeting at 4:11 p.m.

Senator Mortimer
Chair

LeAnn Mohr
Secretary