

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, January 21, 2015

TIME: 3:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Keough, Nonini, Patrick, Souza, and Den Hartog

ABSENT/ EXCUSED: Senators Buckner-Webb, and Ward-Engelking

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) to order at 3:00 p.m. The first order of business was a presentation from Briana LeClaire of the Idaho Federation of Independent Schools.

PRESENTATION: **Briana LeClaire, Executive Director, Idaho Federation of Independent Schools**, introduced her organization and distributed a handout. (Attachment 1)

The Idaho Federation of Independent Schools Federation came into being to promote and protect independent schools' freedom to educate children. Members range across the ideological spectrum and bring together the shared belief that freedom of educational opportunity leads to personal and community growth.

Ms. LeClaire said the median tuition for an Idaho private elementary school is \$3,550, while the median high school tuition is only slightly more than \$5,000. These numbers reflect that half of Idaho's independent schools charge less while still providing tuition assistance. She said there are at least 2,250 private school seats available right now. The seats are not empty for lack of demand; while 3 percent of Idaho's school children are enrolled in independent schools, 27 percent of Idaho parents would choose a private school as their first option.

Ms. LeClaire said the Idaho Federation of Independent Schools is not asking for more tax money, nor does the Federation want anyone attending a school their parents don't want them to attend. She said they are only asking for a level playing field so that all who would choose an independent school are able to do so (see attachment 1).

Senator Souza asked Ms. LeClaire to elaborate on the definition of education savings accounts. **Ms. LeClaire** explained the system is based on Arizona's funding formula, and the process is similar to a health savings account.

Senator Nonini asked for an explanation on the tuition scholarship tax credit. **Ms. LeClaire** explained donations to the scholarship fund are repackaged into dollars that are made available based on means tested scholarships.

Chairman Mortimer asked why private schools are not fully attended. **Ms. LeClaire** replied there is a disparity between the 27 percent of families who would like to have their children attend and the 3 percent that actually do attend, in part due to an income gap.

Chairman Mortimer thanked Ms. LeClaire for her presentation.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Chairman Mortimer passed the gavel to Vice Chairman Thayn.

DOCKET NO. 08-0201-1402: **Tim Hill**, Associate Deputy Superintendent of Public School Finance, gave an overview of the proposed rule changes outlined in **Docket No. 08-0201-1402**, Rules Governing Administration Special Education Funding.

Mr. Hill explained the intent of the change is to provide additional funding for the exceptional children population by shifting a portion of the k-6 attendance funds down into the exceptional category.

MOTION: **Senator Patrick** moved to adopt **Docket No. 08-0201-1402**. **Senator Nonini** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

DOCKET NO. 08-0202-1403: **Dr. Taylor Raney**, Director, Teacher Certification and Professional Standards, explained the changes outlined in **Docket No. 08-0202-1403**, Rules Governing Uniformity. The modifications included: removal of an endorsement of a counselor; an industry standard change for educators adept in hard-of-hearing students; an increase in counselors' credit requirements from 30 to 33; easing certification requirements of licensed nurses and speech/language pathologists, who can now be certified through the Bureau of Occupational Licenses; and, under the Idaho Code of Ethics for professional educators, removal of the word "inappropriate," and addition of the words "confidential" and "sexual nature". **Dr. Raney** explained the rationale for each of these changes.

Senator Souza expressed concern with the requirement of increased credits and asked for further explanation. **Dr. Raney** said that Idaho has a reciprocity agreement with other states through the National Association of State Directors of Education Certification, and that agreement stipulates the requirement.

Chairman Mortimer and **Senators Patrick** and **Nonini** also questioned the credit requirement increase.

MOTION: **Chairman Mortimer** moved to adopt **Docket No. 08-0202-1403** with the exception of Section 028, Subsections 04 and 04 (d). **Senator Patrick** seconded the motion.

Senator Keough asked for an official opinion as to whether only a portion of the recommended changes can be removed.

Vice Chairman Thayn called for an opinion by the rules administrator. **Mr. Jason Shaw**, Department of Administration, Office of Administrative Rules, stated the Committee can approve rules in part. It is the Committee's discretion as to how to adopt the rule.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked Mr. Shaw if the motion on the floor is acceptable. **Mr. Shaw** responded that the motion is correct.

Vice Chairman Thayn called for the vote. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

PASSED THE GAVEL: Vice Chairman Thayn returned the gavel to Chairman Mortimer.

PRESENTATION: **Paul Headlee**, Deputy Division Manager, Public Schools and Higher Education, distributed handouts to the Committee and gave an overview of the Education Budget for fiscal year (FY) 2016 (see attachment 2).

Mr. Headlee commented that the public schools budget of \$1,384.7 billion is by far the largest budget of all state agencies and answered questions posed by Committee members as he went through the budget details.

Chairman Mortimer thanked Mr. Headlee for his informative presentation and drew Committee members' attention to their folders, which contained items for review.

ADJOURNED: There being no further business to come before the Committee, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:30 p.m.

Senator Mortimer
Chair

LeAnn South
Secretary

Jeanne' Clayton
Assistant