

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Monday, March 30, 2015

TIME: 2:00 P.M.

PLACE: Room WW55

MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Keough, Nonini, Patrick, Souza, Den Hartog, 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 meeting to order at 2:05 p.m.

H 300: **Representative Clow**, District 24, presented **H 300** which amends existing law to provide that computation of alternative school support units shall include grades 6 through 12. He explained in the funding for alternative schools, which consist of middle and high schools, there is a missing component for funding the 6th grade alternative school student. He stated this legislation is to change the funding formula for schools to include the 6th graders in the alternative school funding units. He highlighted the changes in the bill and explained the new funding formula. **Representative Clow** said if passed, this will be implemented in 2017.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked if the word secondary was taken out would that then include the grades before 6th grade. **Representative Clow** stated that in the bill the reference is to 6th through 12th grade and it doesn't change anything else.

TESTIMONY: **Penni Cyr**, President, Idaho Education Association (IEA), spoke in support of **H 300**. She emphasized that as more districts configure their schools on a middle school system that includes 6th graders, it is important to have funding to support that structure (see attachment 1).

Peggy Hoy, 6th grade teacher, Vera C. O'Leary Middle School, Twin Falls, spoke in favor of **H 300**. She explained her experience teaching 6th graders in an alternative middle school and the importance of this educational option for students. She expressed the necessity of this program and the need for funding to help these students move forward in getting quality education (see attachment 2).

Vice Chairman Thayn asked how students are selected to attend alternative schools. **Ms. Hoy** explained the process that students go through to get enrolled into an alternative school.

Wiley Dobbs, Superintendent, Twin Falls School District 411, spoke in support of **H 300**. He explained that at the Idaho School Boards Association Convention he presented a resolution calling for alternative school funding for 6th graders in alternative schools. He referred to the handout (see attachment 3) which outlined the reasons and costs associated with this issue. He concluded by saying passing this legislation is an investment in Idaho's youth (see attachment 4).

Senator Souza asked if 6th grade classrooms could be consolidated to save funding. **Mr. Dobbs** answered in the affirmative.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked how are alternative school established. **Mr Dobbs** replied that the local level decides that an alternative school is needed, then they apply to the State Department of Education (SDE) to open a school. Once approved the district can open a school.

Rob Winslow, Executive Director, Idaho Association of School Administrators (IASA), is in support of **H 300**.

Senator Patrick asked if he knew how many alternative schools are in Idaho. **Mr. Winslow** stated he was unsure of that number.

Jess Harrison, Policy and Government Affairs Director, Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA), is in support of **H 300**. This proposal overwhelmingly passed their membership and they are eager to make this effective in 2017.

Representative Clow explained that when 6th grader is in the middle school there are more teachers per student than when 6th grade is housed in an elementary school, thereby the necessity for funding formula change.

MOTION: **Senator Patrick** moved to send **H 300** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Senator Patrick will carry **H 300** on the floor.

H 302: **Senator Nonini**, District 3, presented **H 302**, which adds to existing law to create in the Office of the Governor a science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) Action Center and the STEM Action Center (Center) Board, to provide powers and duties and to provide for reports. He stated that this legislation is a new section of code and is modeled after the Utah legislation. He explained that at the first STEM Caucus the discussion suggested that STEM is not just about education it is about Idaho's economic development. **Senator Nonini** explained the process of gathering the stakeholders together to form this legislation. He outlined the bill explaining the makeup and duties of the Board, where the Center will be housed, and the goals to be achieved. He referred the Committee to the many articles he handed out explaining STEM educational opportunities (see attachment 5).

Senator Ward-Engelking stated that she is very supportive of this legislation. She asked if in the Board make-up would include educators from all levels. **Senator Nonini** explained that the legislation outlines where the Board members would come from. He said it is important to have the private sector on the Board because they bring to the table the needs of the community. He indicated that educators could possibly be a part of the Board.

Senator Den Hartog said that she is hesitant to establish another task force in the Governor's office. She asked if he knew where the funding would go. **Senator Nonini** stated that funding is not an ongoing request, and most likely it would be used for the salary of the executive director and staff members.

Chairman Mortimer asked if he knew what amount of funding would be expected from private contributors. **Senator Nonini** replied he didn't have a specific amount. However, the groups in support of this legislation would help to find the additional funds. He explained Idaho lacks a STEM hub and this legislation could remedy the issue. He said that having the Center housed in the Governor's office increases visibility with a high level of focus on STEM opportunities and achievements, which could increase private donations.

TESTIMONY: **Lorna Finman**, President LCF Enterprises, Post Falls, stated that she stands with Idaho Business Education, Micron, Idaho National Laboratories, and Hewlett Packard in support of **H 302**. She explained the urgency for more STEM education in Idaho, and explained how STEM educated majors operate in many different occupations. **Ms. Finman** said due to the lack of STEM educated Americans, many industries must look outside the U.S. for employees. The reason to boost STEM education is to boost Idaho's economic prosperity. She explained the work that she and her husband have done to promote more STEM learning. She concluded by saying that this bill is about collaboration and it is an investment in Idaho.

Chairman Mortimer asked how she thought the private industry sector would respond to the Center and Board. **Ms. Finman** said they will support and participate in this organization. She thinks by housing it in the Governor's office businesses will trust and feel confident that more will be done to educate in the areas of STEM.

MOTION: **Senator Ward-Engelking** moved to send **H 302** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Keough** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Senator Nonini will carry **H 302** on the floor.

H 308: **Marilyn Whitney**, Office of the Governor, presented **H 308** which amends existing law to provide that certain code provisions relating to pupil service staff allowance do not apply to public charter schools. She stated the change is needed to reflect the new definition of instructional staff contained in the career ladder bill. **Ms. Whitney** said charter schools face different funding challenges, therefore they are exempt from some of the statutory requirements.

MOTION: **Senator Souza** moved to send **H 308** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Buckner-Webb** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Chairman Mortimer will carry **H 308** on the floor.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to approve the Minutes from March 4, 2015. **Senator Souza** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Buckner-Webb** moved to approve the Minutes from March 11, 2015. **Senator Keough** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Patrick** moved to approve the Minutes from March 16, 2015. **Senator Keough** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Nonini** moved to approve the Minutes from March 19, 2015. **Senator Keough** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED: There being no more business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 3:07 p.m.

Senator Mortimer
Chair

LeAnn South
Secretary