

MEETING SUMMARY

JOINT MEETING OF THE
HOUSE AND SENATE COMMITTEES ON EDUCATION

Thursday, March 28, 2013
UPON ADJOURNMENT OF BOTH CHAMBERS
Room 171, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas

Representative James McLean, the Chair of the House Committee on Education, called the meeting to order upon adjournment of both chambers.

MEMBERS OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Senator Johnny Key, Chair; Senator Joyce Elliott, Vice Chair; Senator Eddie Cheatham; Senator Jim Hendren; Senator Uvalde Lindsey; and Senator Jason Rapert.

MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION IN ATTENDANCE: Representative James McLean, Chair; Representative Charles Armstrong; Representative Les Carnine; Representative John Catlett; Representative Bruce Cozart; Representative Gary Deffenbaugh; Representative Jody Dickinson; Representative Charlotte Douglas; Representative Jon Eubanks; Representative Debra Hobbs; Representative Karen Hopper; Representative Sheilla Lampkin; Representative Homer Lenderman; Representative James Ratliff; and Representative Brent Talley.

Update on Issues Regarding National School Lunch Act (NSLA) Categorical Funding and Consideration of Amending the Adequacy Report

Presenters & Synopses:

Ms. Nell Smith, Administrator, Policy Analysis and Research Section, Bureau of Legislative Research, was recognized. Ms. Smith walked Committee members through the Adequacy Report, and, to enrich the understanding of new members, presented the background of the Report and its positioning within the process. She noted that this Adequacy Report is a summary of previous reports and of two previous hearings which, upon approval, will be placed as a supplement in the Adequacy Report.

The Honorable Johnny Key, State Senator, District 17, and Chair, Senate Committee on Education, was recognized. Senator Key said that he appreciated the work done by the Bureau of Legislative Research (BLR) on the issue of NSLA funding, and that this was a good supplement.

Dr. Tom Kimbrell, Commissioner, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Dr. Kimbrell discussed the use of NSLA funding and how that money has been distributed using the “cliff” model. He described working with the University of Arkansas’s Office for Education Policy on the 2006 Odden & Picus recommendation to use an alternative model of “smoothing out” rather than “stepping” the scale. He said the Arkansas Department of Education (ADE) would recommend that a sliding scale be used so that dollars can best be put in school districts with the greatest poverty concentrations, and assigning weights to students in the category of “free” differently than to those in the category of “reduced.” Dr. Kimbrell agreed that it was also necessary to prioritize the use of NSLA funds and to study the effect of the funds on student achievement.

Mr. Michael Crouch, School Performance Evaluator, Office for Education Policy, College of Education and Health Professions, University of Arkansas, was recognized. Mr. Crouch made

comparisons between the “cliff” and the “smoothing” models, and described the effectiveness of the latter model. He also described how the formula for the model is being adjusted for use in other states.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- ✓ transition for the school districts,
- ✓ ensuring the fairest way to direct funds into districts with the greatest number of disadvantaged students,
- ✓ winners and losers among school districts,
- ✓ balances of NSLA funds remaining in school districts,
- ✓ time frame for implementation of new model,
- ✓ “smoothing” movement for the entire spectrum of school districts seen around 40% to 50% in weighted model,
- ✓ development of categories in the free and reduced lunch range,
- ✓ impact on individual school districts,
- ✓ helping schools to prioritize the use of NSLA funds,
- ✓ recommendations made today will trigger legislation,
- ✓ dilution of the intended use of NSLA funds,
- ✓ impact of implementing the new model, and
- ✓ content of legislative bills putting the policy discussion in motion.

Senator Key added that the danger is setting the policy based on what’s happening now. He noted that one of the key provisions of Lake View and the laws passed coming out of Lake View, is that the Committees are tasked with the responsibility of the ongoing evaluation and modification of standards, of funding methods, and of programs, all which have to be evidence-based. He said a policy change must be based on where we should be and taking the necessary steps to move forward.

Representative McLean added that there will be a clearer idea of the impact on individual districts as the bills are crafted and as the policy begins to form.

The Honorable Joyce Elliott, State Senator, District 31, was recognized, and made comments on the basis for her bill.

Senator Key discussed a supplementary recommendation, not in the context of NSLA, regarding adoption of an inflationary adjustment of 2.0% to be applied to the per-pupil foundation amount for fiscal years 2014 and 2015.

Relevant Action:

The Honorable Les Carnine, State Representative, District 90, was recognized, and made a motion to amend the Adequacy Report and to adopt the three supplementary recommendations. The motion was seconded by Representative Sheilla Lampkin. The motion was adopted by a voice vote

Handouts:

Supplement to the Report on Legislative Hearings for the 2012 Interim Study on Educational Adequacy
Supplementary Recommendations

Adjournment:

The meeting adjourned at 5:20 p.m.

Approved: 06/10/13