

MEETING SUMMARY

LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON  
WORKFORCE EDUCATION EXCELLENCE

Tuesday, October 17, 2017

10:00 A.M.

Maverick Transportation, 13301 East Valentine Road  
North Little Rock, Arkansas

Senator Jane English, the Senate Co-Chair of the Legislative Task Force on Workforce Education Excellence, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

**LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON WORKFORCE EDUCATION EXCELLENCE IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Jane English, Senate Co-Chair; Representative Bruce Cozart, House Co-Chair; Senator Eddie Cheatham; Senator Lance Eads; Representative Rick Beck; Representative Dan M. Douglas; and Representative Dan Sullivan.

**NON-LEGISLATIVE MEMBERS OF THE LEGISLATIVE TASK FORCE ON WORKFORCE EDUCATION EXCELLENCE IN ATTENDANCE:** Mr. Kenneth Calhoun; Mr. Stephen Horton; Mr. Paul Rivera; and Mr. Mike Rogers.

**OTHER MEMBERS OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN ATTENDANCE:** Senator Stephanie Flowers; and Representative Carlton Wing.

Remarks by the Chairs

Senator English, and **Representative Bruce Cozart**, House Co-Chair, Legislative Task Force on Workforce Education Excellence (Task Force), welcomed members and thanked Maverick Transportation for hosting the meeting on growing training and workforce needs in the trucking industry.

Introduction of the Members of the Arkansas Trucking Association (ATA)'s Maintenance & Technology Council

**Ms. Shannon Newton**, President, Arkansas Trucking Association, was recognized. Ms. Newton welcomed the Task Force; and, on behalf of ATA, said she appreciated the work being done by the Task Force on workforce issues that are important to the trucking industry. At the request of Ms. Newton, ATA members, other meeting attendees, and members of the Task Force introduced themselves.

Overview of the Current Workforce Needs of the Trucking Industry in Arkansas, with a Focus on the Recruitment, Training, and Retention of Technicians

**Mr. Kenneth Calhoun**, Maintenance Data Management, Fleet Optimization Manager, Altec Service Group, and a non-legislative member of the Task Force, was recognized, and served as Moderator for the meeting. At Senator English's request, Mr. Calhoun, detailed the issues to be reviewed:

- What are your largest needs from the education and workforce system?
- Do our issues come from lack of interested students, career information, training options, job applicants, etc.?

- What programs and initiatives are you part of that are achieving the greatest success and how are those programs funded?
- How might these programs be replicated throughout Arkansas and within other industries?
- How do you define and measure education and workforce development success as an industry?
- Are there any legislative recommendations that you can make to us?

As additional background for the discussion, Mr. Calhoun reported on findings made by the ATA's Technician Curriculum Advisory Committee (Committee) during site visits to postsecondary schools in the state that have some form of medium to heavy truck or diesel technician program. He stated the Committee had difficulty in getting a vetted and accurate list of the number of these institutions, posing a significant challenge to the research and development of curriculum guidelines to suit workforce needs of the industry. He noted the Committee had visited four (4) schools so far. He elaborated on issues the Committee found, including those regarding safety, health, and the working environment; old and dated equipment; schools' lack of awareness of the effects brought about by the complexity of federal mandates; and the explosion of technology. Mr. Calhoun asked fellow members of the Task Force to give consideration to industry representatives at the meeting in terms of two things: existing and future employment within the borders of the state, and tax base represented. He said they are willing partners in addressing issues and finding solutions to industry workforce needs.

After Mr. Calhoun's introductory remarks, brief presentations were made, followed by a lengthy discussion.

Presenters:

**Ms. Christie Toland**, Assistant Superintendent, Gentry Public Schools, discussed the successful partnering of community, industry, and education to bring about change and opportunity in the Gentry School District.

**Mr. George Arrants**, Medium/Heavy Truck Alliance Field Manager, National Automotive Technicians Education Foundation (NATEF), discussed the importance of NATEF accreditation of auto, collision, and medium/heavy truck programs at the secondary and postsecondary level.

**Mr. Rick Vassar**, C.O.O., Truck Centers of Arkansas, discussed the "Get Ahead" program, the partnership program between Daimler Trucks North America (DTNA) and the North Little Rock Center of Excellence (COE), the status of the COE as one of two pilot schools in the nation where the manufacturer provides some of the equipment, and the model for the equipment at Arkansas State University (ASU) Newport.

**Mr. G.E. "Butch" Rice, III**, President and CEO, Stallion Transportation Group, discussed compensation for drivers and taking responsibility for the industry.

**Dr. Kerry Keith Mix**, Provost, Arkansas State University (ASU) Beebe, explained the apprentice-like John Deere program at ASU.

Issues Included in the Discussion:

- the best time to start training programs,
- opening a charter school focused on the trucking industry,
- school choice and workforce programs,
- bringing mechanics from agriculture and trucking who have similar skill sets into the same program,
- seamless transition between secondary and postsecondary school,
- the need for industry to "drive the train,"
- best training programs in the nation,
- "onboarding" – integrating new employees into an organization by offering teaching and guidance through the culture of the industry,
- moving toward standardization,
- changing the perception of the industry,
- communicating knowledge about the industry,
- changing the focus of teachers and career counselors to encompass workforce programs,
- funding for the maintenance of training programs,

- creating a significant block of time in schools for Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs,
- understanding the needs of business and industry, and communicating the relevance of courses to students,
- funding and support for CTE teachers, and
- need for better funding to attract knowledgeable technical teachers.

Handouts:

Report on Mechanics and Technicians Shortage, Arkansas Trucking Association (ATA), Maintenance & Technology Council

Connecting Your Student's Education with Future Careers, Automotive Youth Educational Systems (AYES) Brochure

Review of The Diesel Technician Shortage in Northwest Arkansas and Proposed Solutions, Research Report The AYES Advantage, Brochure

Next Scheduled Meetings:

Wednesday, November 1, 2017, at 2:00 p.m. at Gentry School District Career and Technical Education Center, Gentry, AR

Monday, November 13, 2017, at 1:30 p.m. in the Old Supreme Court, State Capitol, Little Rock

Adjournment:

The meeting recessed at 11:53 a.m. for members to tour the Maverick Transportation facilities.

*Approved : 11/13/2017*