

State of Arkansas
86th General Assembly
Regular Session, 2007

A Bill

SENATE BILL 941

By: Senators Bryles, Wilkins
By: Representative Rainey

For An Act To Be Entitled

AN ACT TO ENSURE THAT POVERTY FUNDING FOR PUBLIC
SCHOOL DISTRICTS CORRESPONDS TO THE LEVEL OF
POVERTY IN THE SCHOOL DISTRICT; AND FOR OTHER
PURPOSES.

Subtitle

AN ACT TO ENSURE THAT POVERTY FUNDING
FOR PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICTS CORRESPONDS
TO THE LEVEL OF POVERTY IN THE SCHOOL
DISTRICT.

WHEREAS, poverty funding should be used to support our poorest school districts rather than our largest, and the current structure for national school lunch student categorical funding has the unintended outcome of providing a reward to large school districts while the amount of funding received does not correspond to the level of poverty; and

WHEREAS, the amount of national school lunch student categorical funding received by a school district has a .83 correlation with a school district's average daily membership, which is very significant, while the amount of funding received by a school district has only a .23 correlation with a school district's percentage of free and reduced-price lunch students; and

WHEREAS, the National Center for Education Statistics indicates, as reported by the Education Trust, that more classes in high-poverty, high-



1 minority schools are taught by out-of-field teachers and that poor and
2 minority students get more inexperienced teachers; and

3
4 WHEREAS, the Education Trust reports that of persons who graduate
5 college by twenty-four (24) years of age, those from high-income families
6 graduate from college at the rate of 75%, while those from low-income
7 families graduate at the rate of 9%; and

8
9 WHEREAS, the Education Trust reports that Arkansas gets the fourth
10 least amount of federal funding per poverty student. The Title I allocation
11 per poor child in Arkansas is \$1,009 compared to Wyoming with \$2,957 and
12 Vermont with \$2,794; and

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14 WHEREAS, quality leadership is a factor in all schools but more funding
15 would permit school districts with concentrated poverty to be able to compete
16 to attract more highly qualified superintendents, principals and teachers,

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18 NOW THEREFORE,

19 BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF ARKANSAS:

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21 SECTION 1. Arkansas Code § 6-20-2303, concerning definitions for
22 public school funding, is amended to add an additional subsection to read as
23 follows:

24 (23)(A) "Poverty index" means an index for each school district
25 with seventy percent (70%) or greater national school lunch students, as
26 defined in this subsection (a), derived from three components:

27 (i) The school district's percentage of national
28 school lunch students;

29 (ii) The number represented in the United States
30 Census Bureau School District Estimates for 2004 data field for relevant age
31 group of children who are five (5) to seventeen (17) years of age in families
32 in poverty; and

33 (iii) The state wealth index for school districts.

34 (B) The poverty index shall be calculated by the following
35 method:

36 (i) Multiplying the school district's percentage of

1 national school lunch students by one hundred (100); then multiplied by
 2 (ii) The number represented by subdivision
 3 (a)(23)(A)(ii) of this section; and multiplied by
 4 (iii) The school district's state wealth index.

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 6 SECTION 2. Arkansas Code § 6-20-2305(b)(1), concerning categorical
 7 funding for public schools, is amended to read as follows:

8 (b)(1) In addition to state foundation funding aid, each school
 9 district shall receive funding for additional education categories as
 10 provided in subdivisions ~~(b)(2)-(6)~~(b)(2)-(7) of this section.

11
 12 SECTION 3. Arkansas Code § 6-20-2305(b), concerning categorical
 13 funding for public schools, is amended to add an additional subdivision to
 14 read as follows:

15 (7) For school years 2007-2008 and 2008-2009, concentrated poverty
 16 funding shall be provided to each public school district with at least
 17 seventy percent (70%) national school lunch students in the following amount:
 18 (i) Ten dollars (\$10.00); multiplied by
 19 (ii) The school district's poverty index; and
 20 multiplied by
 21 (iii) The previous school year's average daily
 22 membership.