

MINUTES OF THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Jean Schodorf at 1:40 p.m. on March 14, 2006, in Room 123-S of the Capitol.

Committee members absent: Carolyn McGinn- excused

Committee staff present: Deb Hollon, Kansas Legislative Research Department
Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes
Shirley Higgins, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee: Representative Tom Sloan
Representative Pat Colloton

HB 2604–Midwestern Higher Education Commission

Noting that he had mixed emotions on the bill, Representative Tom Sloan explained that the Midwestern Higher Education Commission (MHEC) membership includes one Kansas legislator from each house, and there are two alternates. By statute, if the House member is a Republican, then the Senate member is a Democrat, and they serve for two years. He explained that **HB 2604** provides that a legislative member could continue serving, thus upsetting the rotation between the two houses. He noted that House and Senate Democrats agreed to allow a former Republican legislator, Lana Oleen, to attend all of the MHEC meetings for four years, providing her an opportunity to become a member of MHEC's Executive Committee. The bill would allow a legislative member of the MHEC Executive Committee to remain the official Kansas representative for an additional two years as long as the legislator remained on the Executive Committee. He noted that he currently was serving as the Republican member of the MHEC Executive Committee and that he was selected by the MHEC officers because the House Democrat, the primary delegate, did not wish to attend the meetings, and none of the other delegates or alternates sought re-election. In conclusion, he outlined the options which the Committee could choose when taking action on the bill. (Attachment 1)

Deb Hollon, Kansas Legislative Research Department, confirmed that **HB 2604** deals only with the legislative members of the MHEC. Under current law, legislators who are appointed to MHEC can serve only one two-year term. The bill would allow any legislator serving on the Executive Committee to serve up to an additional two-year term.

There being no others wishing to testify, the hearing on **HB 2604** was closed.

Senator Vratil moved to recommend **HB 2604** favorably for passage, seconded by Senator Teichman. The motion carried.

HB 2578–Establishing the Special Education Teacher Service Scholarship

Theresa Kiernan, Revisor of Statutes Office, noted that **HB 2578** was introduced by Representatives Pat Colloton and Kathe Decker. She explained that the bill would establish a Special Education Teacher Service Scholarship program for teachers who have been accepted in a course of instruction leading to licensure and full endorsement as a special education teacher. In this case, a special education teacher would mean a teacher of children with disabilities and would not include gifted children. The act provides for 50 new scholarships each year. The scholarship would be in the amount \$3,000 each semester or its equivalent for a one-year course of study. If a student is not a full-time student, the student would have five years to complete their course of study. Students would be required to serve a three-year full-time service obligation or an equivalent length of time on a part-time basis. The remaining provisions are similar to the other teacher service scholarships as far as failing to meet the obligation. The scholarship would be administered by the Kansas Board of Regents, and funding would be subject to appropriation.

Representative Pat Colloton, testified in support of **HB 2578**. She noted the bill was introduced due to the fact that there is a critical shortage of special education teachers in Kansas, and special education teachers have the largest turnover rate. She pointed out that the trend in recent years has been for most new special

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education teachers to come from licensure programs that allow part-time study spread over several years to obtain a masters, and very little financial assistance is available for this method. The bill is aimed at students who are already licensed and working part-time towards full endorsement in special education. The scholarship would provide them with a tuition credit as they take their required course work over a period of several years. Representative Colloton called attention to written testimony in support of **HB 2578** attached to her testimony from the following: Dean Tes Mahring, Teachers College, Emporia State University; Dean Rick Ginsberg, School of Education, University of Kansas; and Diane Lindeman, Director of Student Financial Assistance, Kansas Board of Regents. (Attachment 2)

Senator Vratil noted that there is also a shortage of teachers for gifted children and asked why the bill limited “qualified student” to a special education teacher who teaches children with disabilities. Representative Colloton responded, “Because that is sort of our number one deficit. It could have included the gifted as well, but my information is that it’s in the area of the disabilities that we have the biggest need. If we wanted to expand this, that would be a friendly amendment.”

At the request of Senator Schodorf, Diane Lindeman responded to questions from the Committee regarding other special education scholarship programs and funding.

There being no others wishing to testify, the hearing on **HB 2578** was closed.

Substitute for HB 2695–Eligibility for Kansas Comprehensive Grant Funds

Ms. Hollon explained that **Substitute for HB 2695** would essentially allow students of those institutions accredited by the Association for Biblical Higher Learning to receive the comprehensive grant program. She noted that it has been by proviso the last couple of years, and **SB 305**, which the Committee passed earlier in the Session, was similar. She explained that **SB 305** as recommended by the Committee would sunset June 30, 2011, and applied only to Barclay College. **Substitute for HB 2695** has the same sunset or when the school is accredited by North Central, and it also requires Barclay College to apply by 2007 for a North Central accreditation. She noted that the House Committee amended **SB 305** to include amendments to the National Guard Educational Assistance Program, and it completely removed the comprehensive grant program. Senator Teichman added that she was informed that the only way for passage of the provisions in the original **SB 305** as recommended by the Senate Education Committee would be through **Substitute for HB 2695** which offered no significant changes. With this, the hearing on **Substitute for HB 2695** was closed.

Senator Teichman moved to recommend **Substitute for HB 2695** favorably for passage, seconded by Senator Vratil. The motion carried.

Senator Schodorf called upon Senator Apple for a subcommittee report on **SB 566** which would establish the Teacher Education Grant Program. He reviewed the bill as introduced and outlined five changes which the subcommittee recommended. The subcommittee did not make any specific recommendation on the issue, but it noted its concern regarding consistency in out-year appropriations. (Attachment 3) As a member of the subcommittee, Senator Goodwin distributed copies of a table comparing teacher education programs administered in Illinois which she requested from the Kansas Legislative Research Department as the subcommittee discussed what other states were doing with this type of bill. (Attachment 4)

The Committee’s attention was returned to **HB 2578**.

Senator Vratil moved to amend **HB 2578** to eliminate the restriction that limits the teachers to teaching students with disabilities and open it up to special education teachers of exceptional children, seconded by Senator Apple.

Senator Ostmeyer commented, “Once the money runs out, I think we got more of a need for the handicapped because their steps are baby steps; the other ones are leaps and bounds. I don’t want to get away from what Senator Vratil is talking about, but I think, if we’re going to have cut one way or the other, I would rather make sure we fund the boy down here that walks with baby steps.” Senator Vratil responded, “This bill provides that the Board of Regents would be responsible for administering the program and awarding the contracts, and I’d rather have the Board of Regents pick the best qualified student to award the scholarship

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to the student that is most likely to continue teaching in the special education area than worry about whether they are teaching students with disabilities or gifted students.”

On a call for a vote on Senator Vratil’s motion to amend **HB 2578**, the motion carried.

Senator Vratil moved to recommend **HB 2578** favorably for passage as amended, seconded by Senator Apple. The motion carried.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:25 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 15, 2006.