

MINUTES OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION.

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Senator Dwayne Umbarger at 1:15 p.m. on February 15, 2001 in Room 514-S of the Capitol.

All members were present except: Senator Schodorf (excused)

Committee staff present Ben Barrett, Legislative Research
Avis Swartzman, Revisor of Statutes
Eric Wimmer, Intern

Conferees appearing before the committee: Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department
Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner of Education

Others attending: See Attached List

Chairman Umbarger updated the Committee on a meeting that he, Senators Vratil, Downey and Oleen, Ben Barrett and Dale Dennis had last evening to discuss narrowing the focus on what they wanted to accomplish in the Senate Education Committee this year. There has been a lot of discussion about the school finance bill and they discussed what they felt was needed and attainable. The Committee has heard a lot about the issues in the last weeks from the various districts telling about the challenges they are facing in providing a quality education to our kids. Numerous issues arose, childhood education, teacher shortages, methods of funding, special education, high energy costs, more equitable funding between school districts, and the need for building improvements. The group addressed many of those issues with a lot of focus on base state aid per pupil, special education, correlation weighting and other issues. They also focused on where to find the dollars to fund these issues.

Chairman Umbarger introduced Ben Barrett, Legislative Research Department, to explain the proposed school finance plan to the rest of the Committee. (Attachment 1) **(NOTE: Correction of a date from July 1, 2001 to June 1, 2001 was made to the information in the original Attachment 1, dated 2-15-01. The information was revised on February 15, 2001. It is the revised copy that is Attachment 1)** The information includes the spending proposals for fiscal year 2002 developed by the group that met last evening. The figures are a comparison of the Governor's recommendation, the group's proposal and the difference in cost above the Governor's plan. The revenue source for the proposed plan is from an increase in sales and use tax beginning June 1, 2001, by 0.2 of a cent per year for the next three years.

Chairman Umbarger introduced Dale Dennis, Deputy Commissioner of Education to give the Committee a comparison of current law and the proposed plan. (Attachment 2) Dale answered questions for the Committee regarding the information he presented.

Chairman Umbarger stated that there were other proposals for financing the plan discussed, such as tax on cigarettes and alcohol and also income tax. The group understands that this is not the perfect plan and that it will probably not be the final plan. The group discussed virtually everything from adding to the base, special education, correlation weighting, early childhood development, teacher shortage, etc. but just because a specific proposal isn't in this proposal, it does not mean that they rejected it, it just means that they didn't put it in. No one in the group got everything they wanted. It is a compromise and is still open for discussion. The group does intend that the plan be passed out as a school finance plan and a revenue source in the same package. It is the hope that this plan will not be held up because of differences of opinion, but rather that the Committee could send out unanimously a plan of this magnitude with the promise that all will be behind a financing source. The poorest areas may be hit heavily with a sales tax increase, but those areas are also going to gain in a much greater proportion than other areas. The

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Committee was urged to think about the plan first, the funding next and not let the bill get hung up in the Committee on a financing source once a plan is agreed on.

The meeting was adjourned. The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, February 19 at 1:30 p.m.