

State of Montana  
46th Legislative Session

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting

The Education Committee of the House of Representatives was called to order at 1:30 p.m., Monday, January 15, 1979 in Room 5 of the Capitol Annex by Chairman, Peter J. Gilligan. House Bills 105 and 107 were heard by the Committee.

Roll was taken and all members of the Committee were present.

Chairman Gilligan opened the Hearing of House Bill 105 (a bill for an act revising the minimum standards for school buses amending Section 20-10-111, MCA) by asking the Sponsor of the Bill, Representative James Burnett of House District 71, to begin testimony.

Representative Burnett explained to Committee members the need for buses in certain areas of the State which could be used on up-paved roads and where snow and road conditions make it impossible for regular school buses to transport students at all times of the school year.

Other proponents of House Bill 105 were:

T. Carl Johnson, who represented the Superintendent of Red Lodge Schools, Lloyd Rose Mr. Johnson stated the need for 4 wheel-drive buses for some areas where the regular school buses can't travel.

Wayne Buchanan, of the Montana School Boards Association, Helena, testified that his organization felt this was an example of legislation that should be left to local controls where authorities would know the situations and could make decisions relative to each separate situation.

Opponents of House Bill 105 included:

Terry Brown, Public Transportation and Safety Consultant, Office of Public Instruction, Helena. Mr. Brown stated he felt all school buses should meet state and federal safety requirements.

Harriet Malloy, Board of Public Ed. Ms. Malloy was not able to poll members of the school board, but would oppose the bill due to safety questions which might arise in case of an accident. She feels this bill would place too much responsibility with the school board in regard to safety decisions and that it provides no guidelines for the school boards to follow.

Rod Johnson, Great Falls Public Schools. Mr. Johnson testified that he would oppose the use of any vehicle to transport public students that is not in compliance with state and federal standards.

Robert Beach, School Bus Contractors of Montana, Rt. 5, Missoula. Mr. Beach feels there should be no variance in school bus construction.

Walt Miller, Montana Highway Patrol, Helena. The Highway Patrol opposes this bill since it would exclude minimum requirement standards.

Bob Stockton, Administrator, Department of Financial Services, Office of Public Instruction. Mr. Stockton informed the Committee that small school buses are available in four wheel drive and have a seating capacity for about twelve persons. The cost difference is approximately \$2,000-\$3,000 more for these buses over a vehicle which would not meet the present standards.

After proponents and opponents of House Bill 105 presented their testimony, Committee members questioned witnesses regarding safety, cost, and conditions under which minimum standard school buses would be used. The number of school buses in questions was estimated to be about 3 out of 20-25 by Representative Burnett. It was also pointed out that these buses would not be used for basketball games or activities of that nature.

Discussion of House Bill 105 was closed by the Chairman.

The Hearing of House Bill 107 (an act to raise the bonded indebtedness limit for county high schools to equal the limit for other high school districts, amending Sections 7-7-2203 and 7-14-2524, MCA and providing an immediate effective date) began with Rep. Burt Hurwitz, Sponsor of the Bill, explaining the circumstances which brought about the need for the Bill. Other proponents of House Bill 107 were:

Bob Stockton, Administrator, Department of Financial Services, Office of Public Instruction. Mr. Stockton stated that the Office of Public Instruction concurs with the bill.

John Ryan, Broadwater County High School, Townsend, Mt. Mr. Ryan added the information that the Broadwater County High School was built in 1918 and it was estimated that it would cost about \$300,000 just to bring the school up to codes.

There were no opponents of House Bill 107 present.

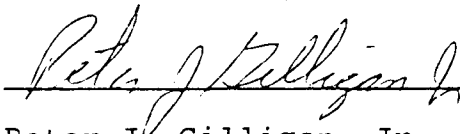
Discussion of House Bill 107 was held , and the Hearing was closed by the Chairman.

The Education Committee will meet in Executive Session on House Bills 105 and 107 on Wednesday, January 17, 1979 at 1:30 p.m. in the Capitol Annex.

House Bills 132, 140 and 142 will be heard by the Committee on Friday, January 19, 1979 at 1:30 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 2:10 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

  
Peter J. Gilligan, Jr., Chairman