

State of Montana
46th Legislative Session

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

Minutes of Meeting

A meeting of the Education Committee of the House of Representatives was called to order at 1:30 p.m. on Monday, January 22, 1979 in Room 5 of the Capitol Annex by Chairman Peter J. Gilligan.

The roll was taken and shows that Representative Yardley was excused. All other members were present.

The purpose of the meetings was to hear House Bills 175, 207 and House Joint Resolution 7.

Chairman Gilligan asked Representative Ann Mary Dussault to begin the hearing on House Joint Resolution 7. Rep. Dussault informed the committee that this bill had passed both houses last session but she had asked the priorities committee not to consider it at that particular time. Rep. Dussault feels, however, that this legislation has enough merit to be considered again this session.

Proponents of House Joint Resolution 7 were:

Judy Johnson, 1505 Stuart, Helena, Mt. - Ms. Johnson testified that "an intermediate school district structure in the State of Montana could assure all students of an equal education background through several avenues such as sharing personnel not usually available to small school districts due to the cost factor, i.e., vocational education, math and science specialists, coordinators, reading specialists, music specialists, art specialists; by sharing programs in special education, Title 1 specialists, medial delivery services; by sharing equipment, i.e., computer assisted instruction, driver education simulators, off-set printing; by sharing media services, i.e., films, film strips, slides; by cooperative purchasing, i.e., hot lunch programs, athletic equipment, audio visual hardware, teaching supplies; by sharing inservice education and adult education projects; by sharing special projects, i.e., gifted and talented programs, counseling, library coordination and by sharing specialized services, i.e., electronic equipment repair, scheduling and payroll and other services." (See Exhibit 1)

Cheryl Hutchinson, Helena, Mt. - Ms. Hutchinson spoke in support of HJR 7. "In light of the realities of declining enrollments with dwindling resources and in view of Montana's geography and its large number of smaller districts, it becomes imperative that alternatives be considered wherever they present themselves. Among perceived benefits of intermediate units, constituting cause for their consideration as an attractive alternative, are: increased cooperation between school & general government entities, better use of appropriate technology, improved research/development/evaluation capacities, more effective dissemination networks & information systems. (See Exhibit 2)

Leonard Sargent, Helena, Mt. - Mr. Sargent, testified as an individual who has worked for or with intermediate service districts in Oregon, Washington, California, Texas, Colorado, Nebraska and New York. While their structures vary, no state which has implemented this concept has ever seriously considered abandoning it. Quite simply, it has proven too valuable in increasing service while cutting costs."
(See Exhibit 3)

There were no opponents to House Joint Resolution 7.

Representative Dussault, in closing, stated this bill would allow several school districts to band together to provide services which could be used by many schools.

The hearing on House Joint Resolution was closed. Chairman Gilligan requested Rep. Bengston begin the hearing on House Bill 175.

Representative Bengston explained to the committee HB 175 would require uniform age requirements and passed out a "Rationale for Passage" sheet to committee members (See Exhibit 4)

Proponents of House Bill 175 were:

Representative Burnett - who reiterated Representative Bengston's point of view concerning this bill.

John R. Fero, President, Montana Association of Elementary School Principals, 402 N. Warren, Helena, Mt.

Mr. Fero stated the MAESP is in favor of HB 175. A poll of the members of MAESP was recently taken and results show a ten to one ratio in favor of the bill. (See Exhibit 5)

Myrna Ridey, Kindergarten School Teachers Assn., Helena, Mt. -
Ms. Ridey told committee members that she could never be sorry she let a child gain a year's maturity before entering him in a program. A child can be hurt by pushing him too soon. She asked, "Why take a chance on destroying a child's self-confidence? Let's give every child a chance to be successful."

Leonard Sargent, Montana School Boards Association, 501 N. Sanders, Helena, Mt. - "We generally support this bill. We do favor some assurance that a local school board could under its adopted policies make exceptions when testing indicated readiness sufficient to be enrolled." (See Exhibit 6)

David Sexton, 1232 E. 6th Ave, Helena, Mt. - (Montana Education Association) The MEA agrees with the need for a uniform standard but is concerned about the flexibility for earlier entrance if a student is especially mature or gifted. There does not need to be a commonly used date for all districts. (See Exhibit 7)

There were no opponents to House Bill 175 present.

Representative Bengston answered questions from the committee concerning whether the cut-off date would be September 1 or the first school day.

The hearing on House Bill 175 was closed. Representative Waldron began the hearing on House Bill 207 by telling the committee what this bill does is it passes a law that mandates additional services, functions, or facilities. The law doesn't become effective unless it is funded.

Proponents of House Bill 207 were:

Wayne Buchanan, Director of Special Services, Montana School Boards Association, 501 N. Sanders, Helena, Mt. - "This bill if successful will have two effects; it will mandate that future legislatures take a hard look at the cost and funding alternatives for all bills affecting local school districts and it will cause measures to fail which do not provide for justifiable, essential additions to the burden of services which local districts must provide."
(See Exhibit 8)

John Fero, Central School, School Administrators of Montana, Helena, Mt. - The School Administrators of Montana is in favor of this bill.

Ed Nelson, Montana Tax Payers Association - "We support this measure but are concerned over the fact that it doesn't effect rule making on the part of education." (See Exhibit 10)

Dave Sexton, 1232 E. Sixth Ave., Helena, Mt. - (Montana Education Association) "We generally support the concept but have some concern about the ramifications." (See Exhibit 11)

There were no opponents of House Bill 207 present.

Representative Waldron stated one of the problems with school districts is their only source of revenue is property tax. He went on to explain other possible methods of funding available for school districts. Representative Waldron suggested that amendments to this bill be given to him by Friday or Saturday.

The Committee members were then allowed to question the witnesses about the implications of House Bill 207. The hearing was closed.

The meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Peter J. Gilligan, Jr. Chairman