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 12:30 p.m. in Room 5 of the Capitol Annex on Wednesday, March 7, 1979, by Chairman Peter J. Gilligan.

The roll was taken and shows Representatives Reichert, Teague and Anderson excused. All other committee members were present.

The purpose of the meeting was to hear Seante Bills 2, 262, and 273.

Chairman Gilligan requested Senator McCallum to explain to the committee Senate Bill 262 (an act revising the allocation of federal forest reserve money to school districts).

Proponents of Senate Bill 262 were:

Donald R. Waldron, Libby Public Schools, Libby, Mt. - Mr. Waldron explained to the committee the major points of SB 262 and urged passage of the bill. (See Exhibit 1)

Penny Underwood, Rt. 3, P.O. Box 1153-A, Libby, Mt. - (Lincoln County Superintendent of Public Schools) - Ms. Underwood reiterated points made by Mr. Waldron and passed out Federal Forest Reserve Districtubtion Sheets for Lincoln County Schools to the committee (See Exhibit 2)

Charlotte Edwards, Broadus, Mt. - "This will be a start in correcting an unfair area of the Foundation Program, whereby smaller counties are subsidizing school programs of the larger cities." (See Exhibit 3)

Edward Nelson, 1706 9th Ave, Helena, Mt. - (Montana Taxpayers Association) - Mr. Nelson told the committee his organization supports this bill. (See Exhibit 4)

Opponents to Senate Bill 262 were:

Shauna Thomas, P.O. Box 1246, Helena, Mt.- Ms. Thomas (Representing the Montana Federation of Teachers) spoke in opposition to SB 262. (See Exhibit 5)

Testimony,which by time limitation,was not presented orally is attached in Exhibits 6 through 11.

The committee was allowed to question the witnesses and the hearing on Senate Bill 262 was closed.

Senator Blaylock was requested by Chairman Gilligan to explain to the committee Senate Bill 2 (an act relating to the school foundation program; providing for changes in financial schedules for the maximum general fund budgets for elementary and high schools).

Proponents of Senate Bill 2 were:

Georgia Rice, Superintendent, Office of Public Instruction, Helena, Mt. - Ms. Rice stated, "I respectfully request your positive consideration of SB 2 for the following reasons: 1. Declining enrollments do not necessarily translate to declining costs. Teh 8% request is actually an approximate 6% increase in dollars because of inflation and declining enrollment. 2. If the formula is not increased at the state level it will require additional local property tax increases to maintain the existing levels of educational programs. In a sense it is a property tax relief through the foundation formula. 3. The task force which studied the distribution of money to our schools in Montana recommended your serious consideration of an increase in the formula to maintain programs." (See Exhibit 12)

Phil Campbell, Montana Education Association, 1232 E. Sixth, Helena, Mt. - Mr. Campbell stated, "The MEA supports SB 2 with the 8% increase in the foundation program but feel that the schedules should be increased to 9%." (See Exhibit 13)

Bob Laumeyer, Superintendent of Schools, Boulder, Mt. - Mr. Laumeyer spoke in support of SB 2.

Shauna Thomas, P.O. Box 1246, Helena, Mt. - Ms. Thomas, representing the Montana Federation of Teachers told the committee the organization she was representing supports SB 2. (See Exhibit 5)

Leonard Sargent, Montana School Boards Association,501 N. Sanders, Helena, Mt. - Mr. Sargent told the committee, "We support this bill, but recommend that the schedule be returned to its original level of 9.2% per year." (See Exhibit 14)

Martha L. Onishuk, 5855 Pinewood Ln., Missoula, Mt. - (Representing the Montana PTA, and the Missoula PTA) - Ms. Onishuk stated, "MPTA supports the bill as originally written with an increase of 9.2% for each year of the biennium." (See Exhibits 15 & 16)

Jacob Block, School Administrators of Montana, Great Falls, Mt. - Mr. Block presented the committee with a hand-out showing the effect of SB 2 (Foundation Program) increases on the voted levy. (See Exhibit 17)

Opponents of Senate Bill 2 were:

Donald R. Waldron, Libby Public Schools, Libby, Mt. - Mr. Waldron spoke in support of the concept of Senate Bill 2, but was opposed to the amendments made in the Senate decreasing the appropriation from 9.2% to 8.0%.

Representative Pistoria spoke in opposition to a 9.2 % increase because he felt increases go to school administration rather than to the educational programs.

Bill Gould, Lincoln County Commissioners, Rt. 1, Box 81 A, Eureka, Mt. - Mr. Gould opposed the amendments made in the Senate as stated earlier. (See Exhibit 6)

Ed Nelson, 1706 9th Ave., Helena, Mt. - (Montana Taxpayers Association) - Mr. Nelson told the committee his organization doesn't oppose SB 2, only the bill in the amended form.

Charlotte Edwards, Broadus, Mt. - Ms. Edwards told the committee she supports the bill, however, would have to agree with Representative Pistoria that increases are spent for administrative purposes rather than educational programs.

The committee was allowed to question the witnesses and the hearing on Senate Bill 2 was closed.

Chairman Gilligan requested Senator McCallum to explain to the committee Senate Bill 273 (an act requiring tuition payment for a hgihg school student attending a high school in a district outside his resident district and creating a high school tuition fund).

Proponents of Senate Bill 273 were:

Robert M. Banks, Superintendent, Frenchtown Public Schools, Frenchtown, Mt. - Mr. Banks stated, "It is our contention, that to allow a student from one hgih school district to attend school in another district without paying tuition, is unfair to the receiving district. The law presently being adhered to, works a hardship on the receiving district in respect to overcrowding facilities available, and it is also a fact that the parents of students from out of the district do not contribute to the tax base of the receiving district in supplying the revenue necessary for the educational and building programs of the district. " (For complete written testimony, See Exhibit 18)

Claude H. Lackner, Rt. 2, Missoula, Mt. - Mr. Lackner reiterated points made in Mr. Banks' testimony above. (See Exhibit 19)

There were no opponents of Senate Bill 273 present. The committee was allowed to question the witnesses and the hearing was closed.

The committee went into Executive Session. Representative Lory moved to amend SB 32. The motion carried unanimously. Representative Uhde moved SENATE BILL 32, AS AMENDED, BE CONCURRED IN. The motion carried unanimously.

Representative Lory moved to amend SB 59 on page 2, line 8, changing the word "or" to "and". The motion carried unanimously. Representative Oberg moved SENATE BILL 59 AS AMENDED, BE CONCURRED IN. The motion carred unanimously.

Representative Kemmis moved to amend SB 441. The motion carried unanimously. Representative Lory moved SENATE BILL 441, AS AMENDED, BE CONCURRED IN. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

Peter J. Gilligan Jr.
Peter J. Gilligan, Jr., Chairman

MJW