HOUSE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

January 31, 1983

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Fritz Daily in room 420 of the Capitol Building, at 12:30 p.m., with all members present, except Representatives Hammond, Hannah, and Yardley, who were excused.

HOUSE BILL 444

REPRESENTATIVE BERNIE SWIFT, District 91, Hamilton, opened by stating this bill is introduced at the request of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. It is a brief change in the existing statute. It revises page 5 of the present statute. Line 18, page 5, refers to the total allowable cost of the Special Education budget. The bill is entitled an act to change the basis on which each school district receives its pro rata share of the available appropriations for Special Education whenever the total allowable cost of the Special Education budgets exceeds available appropriations. The specific objective is to prioritize the budget change. Special Education appropriation is reviewed and handled by OPI on a biennium These budgets come in from the districts. If programs were to exceed the dollars available, uniform percentages would be applied to the programs to reduce them on a like basis. The salaries and personnel parts of this program normally amount to 92% to 94% statewide. If there is a need that might meet a higher priority consideration, they would be able to do so at the present time.

PROPONENTS

GAYLE GRAY, Office of Public Instruction, submitted copies of her testimony to committee members. (see exhibit 1)

FRED APPLEMAN, Missoula, said School Administrators and Special Education support this bill.

LARRY HOLMQUIST, Special Education Coop., said we are in support of the OPI proposal. This is not necessarily the most ideal way to fund Special Education, but in view of meeting the needs that are laid out, it prioritizes our ability to get services to children. It allows OPI to establish help for kids in need.

Rep. Swift closed by saying I would like to solicit the support of the committee. This would give OPI a better approach and a handle for addressing situations that would serve a real need.

Questions from committee. Rep. Peck asked Ms. Gray if OPI is

appropriating even though it is not in the law. The response was the law states that if there is not sufficient money, then allowable costs must be pro rated. It is our opinion and the opinion of our legal staff, that we could pro rate at different levels. We wanted to come back to the legislature and find out if this is indeed a correct interpretation. If so, we would like language to indicate that. Specifically in the law, it refers to pro rata, and we are saying we are pro rating at two levels.

Rep. Peck asked if it is feasible to involve the local people in determining the priorities suggested. Ms. Gray replied we didn't do that a great deal when we first had the requests for funding two years ago. Since that time, we have talked with many local district general administrators, and Special Education administrators. The only request that has come up over and over is that certain services be termed priority 1. We have talked a great deal about out-of-district placements, whether this should be a priority 1 or a priority 2. We have left it as a priority 1, because one placement could devastate an entire community.

Rep. Peck said I have some reservations about prioritizing by the Superintendent of Public Instruction, because needs of districts vary. Ms. Gray stated that she would agree. Rep. Peck asked Ms. Gray if she could see involvement of local people. The response was in November, we visited 13 to 16 different sites and regional meetings, we brought this up at every sight. They should have been aware.

Rep. Eudaily asked Ms. Gray if the appropriation for Special Education would also include the contingency fund. Are you going to pro rate the regular program budgets as well as the contingencies. The answer was it has been the policy in the past to not pro rate the contingency funds. The feeling is that they are for emergencies. Contingency funds in the last three years have not been pro rated.

Rep. Eudaily asked Ms. Gray if it would be her intention to continue along that base. The response was it would our office contention to do so.

Rep. Yardley asked what is the total cost of Special Education? Ms. Gray replied it is very difficult to arrive at that figure. Our best estimate at this point would indicate that there was approximately one million dollars in the state allocation spent on Special Education.

Rep. Yardley commented if we are paying less that 3/4 of the total costs, there has got to be considerable additional money. Ms. Gray replied in the past, additional local costs were primarily indirect costs such as heating, lighting, etc. It hasn't been until the last two years that districts have had to pay a portion of the direct costs, ie., teacher salaries, health insurance, etc. Most districts that had much of their Special Education budget directed into teacher salaries, aid salaries, and speech pathologists came out much better than those with costs directed toward administrative costs and equipment. We didn't automatically approve all district budgets on the basis of priority 1 and priority 2. Before we started prioritizing various allowable costs, we went through and reviewed carefully every budget, and made some pretty major cuts in the requests so that the budgets were somewhat consistent.

Rep. Kitselman said Billings has set a priority for a certain project which is working well and is-funded. If the Superintendent decides that is not the same ranking in priority, what happens to the project. Ms. Gray answered total priority system only determines an allocation for a district. The local district can go ahead and pay for it with state funds. This program merely determines an allocation.

Rep. Kitselman said if we continue to maintain our high priority project, what source do we use. Ms. Gray replied you get a set share of funding based on a consistent prioritizing across the board. You can spend this money however you wish.

Chairman Daily asked Ms. Gray if under state laws there are only certain things the local district can pick up, as far as Special Education costs are concerned. The response was in 1979, the legislature, in the first year of the biennium, said that no longer would social security, teacher retirement, public employee retirement be payable with Special Education funding, that the counties would pay them. The second year of that biennium, no longer would indirect costs be payable with Special Education dollars, but the district was able to pick up anything in addition to what the state gave them.

Chairman Daily closed the hearing on House Bill 444 at 1:00 p.m.

HOUSE BILL 474

REPRESENTATIVE KENNETH NORDTVEDT, District 77, Bozeman, opened by saying this bill would incorporate into the foundation program, part of the costs for the school districts fringe benefits. This bill would incorporate a state equalization. There was an interim education committee over the last two years that met and dealt with equalization and special constitutional questions about whether we were meeting our mandates. The fringe benefits by

basic school payrolls is primarily a part of the basic education cost system. This part of school financing was transferred back to the local taxpayer through the local levy. Rep. Nordvedt passed out exhibits to aid in the explanation of this bill. (see exhibit 2, 3, 4) The cost per student to the school district has increased by 10%. I had hoped that this money would show up in decreased voter levies, but we have pumped more money into the voted levies. The worst thing going for my bill is the very tight budget. By giving taxpayers some relief on the mandatory voting levy, we could guarantee a reduction. The Interim Committee on Education Finance recognized this problem and that this would be a step in the direction of more equalization. The fiscal cost would be close to fifteen million dollars per year.

PROPONENTS

WAYNE BUCHANAN, Montana School Board Association, said basically the idea of this bill is a good one. It does provide equalization and local tax relief. We do support the idea. This may not be the year for this bill. We would want to be certain that if the bill is adopted, you fund it as a seperate part of the foundation program. The fifteen million dollars is probably prohibitive, but if this could be fully funded on the state level, MSBA could support the bill.

OPPONENTS

DAVE SEXTON, Montana Education Association, said we think it doesn't really help anybody. We are in favor of equalization, but this really doesn't provide equalization. It takes money out of the general fund operations and uses it to pay for This would require the legislature to appropriate more money for state equalization just to keep equal. The bill would have the effect of adding to any foundation increases that are currently being discussed in the legislature. think there is going to be any help to schools, and I don't think there is going to be any voted levy relief. The voted levies would have to increase to improve the general fund budget. The wealthy counties would be paying less than they are paying now, and the only benefit would be to big taxpayers. Poorer districts will have to vote higher levies in order to fund their budgets. It would make more sense to equalize the retirement levy if we could make costs of retirement statewide, take this average and impose mills at the same rate. Then we would have true equalization.

GARY STEUERWALD, Office of Public Instruction, said we are talking about 33 million dollars from this biennium. To replace these dollars, a district will have to cut programs and increase the voted levy, or the state will have to kick in an additional 7%. Richer counties are going to get greater dollar amounts.

JESS LONG, School Administrators of Montana, said this would mean higher costs in terms of general fund appropriations. It would put additional stresses on trying to determine educational costs from that fund. 15 million dollars is an appropriation that would be difficult to meet.

Rep. Nordtvedt closed by saying this is a tough year to do a bill like this. I would like to see this bill passed at some token level, to start a state committment to absorbing retirement benefits as part of the general fund, and eventually get state aid. There is no rational reason why the retirement benefits are sitting all by themselves outside the general funds of schools, and are funded 100% from local common property taxes. The idea would be to some day get the state aid up to as big a fraction of the retirement benefit as it is in the present general funds so that they could be funded by one foundation program grant. The diversions of money from the retirement levy would be done exactly the way we do it for transportation. not just a program diversion from one budget to another. ultimate financial burden would be upon the state. oppose amending the bill to do what MEA has suggested, because that is an attempt to redistribute wealth from one group to another.

Ouestions from committee

Rep. Donaldson asked Mr. Steuerwald if this would work on a county basis. The reply was we have a limited pot and they are suggesting that you take some additional money out of the limited pot and put it into another pot. The net result is that there is 30 million dollars less for school districts to use in the general fund. There is an additional 30 million dollars for them to use in the retirement fund.

Rep. Peck commented that retirement funds are not an educational function. Rep. Nordvedt answered I don't think anybody but schools view their employment retirement any differently than health insurance benefits or insurance policies. It is a basic cost of your payroll, particularly when it is not negotiated at the local level. It is the cost of doing business to the schools tacked on top of their payrolls.

Rep. Peck asked Rep. Nordtvedt how he sees the interim education committee relating to this bill, as in comparison to the two bills they have proposed. The response was they could both pass and not interfere with each other.

Rep. Kitselman said retirement costs are fixed costs, that is an obligation that the employers have. It makes no sense that fixed costs should be subject to state appropriations. Mr. Sexton answered other states which have had to go to the legislature for appropriations every year are in trouble. We have tied a fixed cost to a fixed source of taxes.

Chairman Daily said what this will do is to make a 7% reduction in the appropriation to every district so in effect, it doesn't deal with the retirement problem where different districts are paying different amounts for retirement. Rep. Nordtvedt replied the state shares the cost.

Chairman Daily closed the hearing on House Bill 474 at 1:45 p.m.

HOUSE BILL 419

REPRESENTATIVE GENE DONALDSON, District 29, Helena, opened by saying this bill came out of the finance committee on public transportation. This one deals with putting a load limit back on school busses. We are suggesting a 60% load requirement. If you have a bus that had 60 person load capacity, you would find they would be reimbursed 90 cents a mile. If they only had 40 eligible students, they would get 65 cents reimbursement, which is 75% of the payment for 60% of the students. We are trying to cut this back so that the state does not have the situations and abuses that exist. This would save the state almost a million dollars in the next biennium. A district can come down to 2/3 level and still receive reimbursement. We are saying you can't reimburse kids under the three mile limitation, on the other hand, we are doing it.

PROPONENTS

WAYNE BUCHANAN, Montana School Boards Association, said it seems to me that in reading the bill, we would have some difficulty with the language on line 5, page 2, concerning eligible transportees that board the school bus. At the secondary level, we have kids that stay after school for extracurricular activities. They would not be counted because they might not actually ride the bus home. It seems that what you are doing is shifting the cost of running busses. It actually transfers the cost of running busses back to the local taxpayer. That isn't a gain to the school districts.

ROD JOHNSON, Transportation Director for Great Falls Public Schools, said it still costs you the same amount of money to haul one kid as it does for a whole load. Somebody has to pick up this cost. If we pick up 12 kids on one run, they are still entitled to that ride. On this 60 passenger bus we are using, we turn around and pick up 54 kids. By passing this bill, we are going to go out and purchase new equipment.

<u>JESS LONG</u>, School Administrators of Montana, said I agree with the aforementioned testimony. In addition, in some school districts it is necessary to underload busses in order to take care of weather conditions. You are forcing a situation of rotation.

Rep. Donaldson closed by saying we have never been reimbursed for extracurricular activities. I think somewhere we have got to have a little more efficiency. We are not saying you have to have full capacity, just 2/3.

Questions from committee. Committee members had no questions.

HOUSE BILL 457

REPRESENTATIVE RALPH EUDAILY, District 100, Missoula, introduced House Bill 457 as an act to provide that the county and state equalization apportionment of a school district be reduced by 1/90th for each school day that the district fails to meet the requirement of 180 days of pupil instruction each school fiscal year. This bill is to correct some situations that could come The elementary school districts are treated differently than the high school districts. High schools were not under this law, and they did not lose their interest and income monies. As a result of losing more than 180 days, OPI said both would lose interest income. This is a considerable blow. think this is what the legislature intended. What they should pay for is 1/180th of the amount. OPI felt that was not enough of a penalty, we compromised and this is what we came up with, 1/90th. At the same time, it prevents a school from losing all of the interest income money.

PROPONENTS

BOB STOCKTON, Office of Public Instruction, said we were asked to come up with legislation that would make the penalty equal. Under the old law, elementary schools would lose all their funding from interest income. This amounted to 40% of the funds we were paying into school districts. When the Supreme Court ruled that high schools were not under this stipulation, the schools were actually making a net profit, because they didn't have costs for those days. We want to make sure it is not profitable to spend less than 180 days in school.

JESS LONG, School Administrators of Montana, voiced his support for House Bill 457.

<u>DAVID SEXTON</u>, Montana Education Association, said we are interested in what the bill does to adjust the inequality between elementary and high school. We don't have any particular feelings about the figure of 1/90th, but we support the basic concept.

There were no opponents to House Bill 457.

Rep. Eudaily closed.

Rep. Lory asked Mr. Stockton if the 1/90th stipulation would eliminate the chance of the school making a profit. The answer was we think it will, we have to start somewhere.

Rep. Sands asked why a school district would not conduct 180 days. Rep. Schye replied weather conditions. In rural farming communities where they have to work on the farms in the spring, they have a hard time making up these days. If the emergencies occur late in the school fiscal year, they would not have enough days in the school fiscal year to make it up.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

HOUSE BILL 457

Rep. Eudaily moved House Bill 457, DO PASS, the motion passed unanimously.

House Bills 395 and 396 were put into a subcommittee, with Rep. Peck, Chairman, Rep. Sands, and Rep. Hammond.

House Bill 474

Rep. Kitselman moved to table House Bill 474.

Rep. Peck made a substitute motion, House Bill 474, DO NOT PASS. The motion carried with Representatives Sands and Kitselman voting no.

HOUSE BILL 315

Rep. Lory moved House Bill 315, DO PASS.

Rep. Lory moved the amendments to House Bill 315, DO PASS, the vote carried unanimously. (see exhibit 5)

Rep. Lory moved House Bill 315, DO PASS as amended, the motion passed unanimously.

Rep. Donaldson moved to reconsider action on House Bill 474. The motion failed with Representatives Eudaily, Keenan, Nilson, Nisbet, Peck, Schye, and Daily voting no.

HOUSE BILL 419

Rep. Donaldson moved House Bill 419, DO PASS.

Rep. Eudaily asked Rep. Donaldson how much the opponent from Great Falls is on the right track when he says it would require them to buy extra equipment. The answer was if they had a 75 passenger bus and they were running only half the people, I don't think they would have to buy a new bus. They could still run the bus but just shift to the local districts. This is in open violation of the statutes, and I believe we should try to comply with the law.

Rep. Eudaily said are you saying they are counting the people under three miles to ride the bus. Rep. Donaldson responded the law says you shall not, but they do.

Rep. Schye said what will this do to the rural schools where we are not talking about the 3 mile problem. For safety factors, a bigger bus is much better. Rep. Donaldson replied anything over 40 is reimbursed at the same rate.

Rep. Sands commented what it means to say is eligible transportees that board this school bus. Do they do some sort of sampling or do they mean transportees that are entitled to ride the bus. Rep. Peck answered they used to use the date October 1, and the kids riding at that time were counted.

Rep. Lory asked Rep. Peck if it would be better set at 50%. The response was I don't think you are going to get at the problem of underloading the busses.

Rep. Donaldson's motion passed 8 to 5, with Representatives Miller, Nilson, Nisbet, Schye, and Daily voting no.

Chairman Daily adjourned the meeting at 2:45 p.m.

FRITZ DAILY Chairman

Cheryl Fredrickson, secretary

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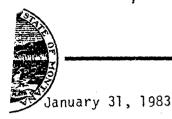
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STATE CAPITOL HELENA, MONTANA 59620 (406) 449-3095 Ed Argenbright Superintendent

To:

Fritz Daily, Chairman

House Education Committee

From:

Gail Gray, Manager

Special Education (449-3693)
Department of Special Services

Re:

HB444

A bill for an Act entitled: "An act to change the basis on which each school district receives its pro rata share of the available appropriations for special education whenever the total allowable cost of the special education budgets exceeds available appropriations: amending section 20-7-431, MCA."

During the 1981-82 budget cycle it became clear that requested state special education funds would greatly exceed the available appropriation. Requested increases in the 1981-82 budgets ranged from 5,875 percent to -4 percent. A straight pro rata of requested funds would need to be 72 percent. The Office of Public Instruction, in an effort to provide a plan to provide budget allocations on as consistent and equitable basis as possible, devised a variable pro rata system based on available special education appropriations. The Office felt that there were certain services for handicapped children that were basic, at the core, of their free and appropriate public education (FAPE). These included resource and self-contained classroom teacher and aide positions, speech pathologists and school psychologists positions and the allowable costs for out-of-district placements. Other services also felt important, but at a lower priority for handicapped students to receive a free appropriate public education included: recreation, occupational, physical therapy, special education administration, social workers, vocational education teachers, adaptive physical education teachers, equipment, supplies, clerical services, nurses and rent and utilities for special education cooperatives. These services were pro rated to the funding level left after priority one or core services were pro rated at 100 percent. resulting pro rata was 59 percent. The pro rata was used to determine an allocation of state special education funds for each district and special education cooperative. The district or cooperative, upon review of the state allocation, then examined their available local and federal resources and prepared an amended state special education budget which totaled the state allocation.

We feel the variable pro rata system provided for greater consistency and equity in the allocation of state special education funds and would urge a do pass on HB444.

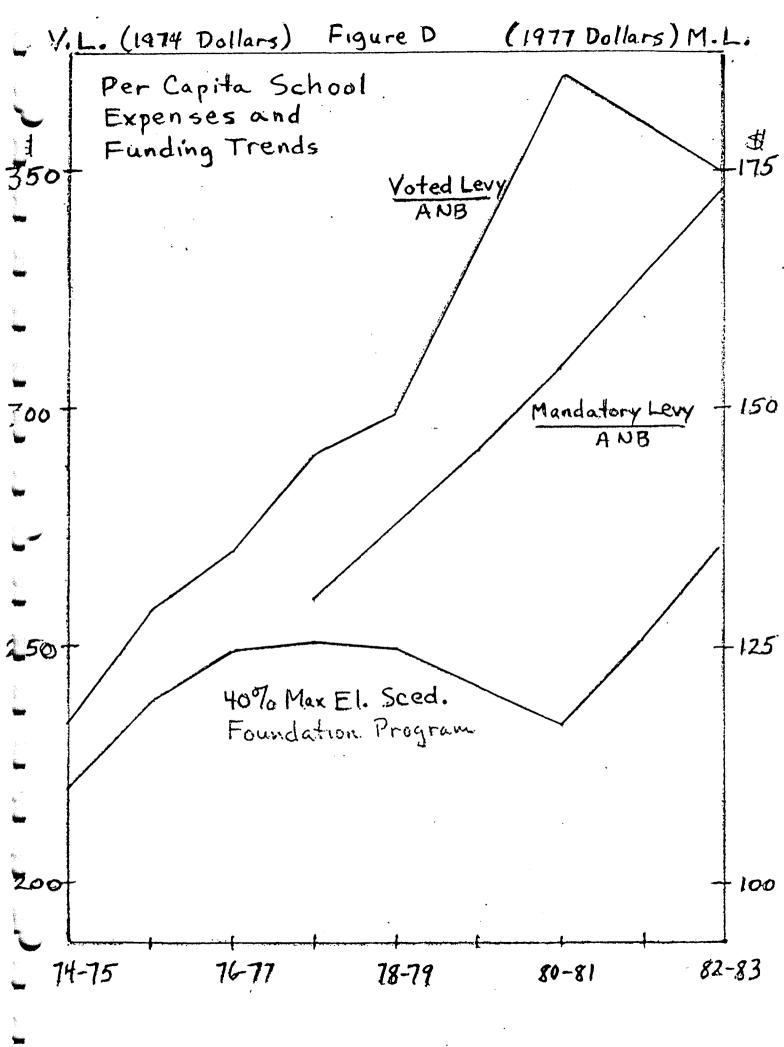


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Table

Results of 1981 Legislature's Foundation Prog. **P**) (inflation adjusted F.P. + 15.3% Voted Levies ANB 3.9%

School Budgets + 10.70%

HOUSE BILL NO. 315

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A BILL FOR AN ACT ENTITLED: "AN ACT ALLOWING SCHOOL BUILDING PLANS TO BE REVIEWED AND APPROVED BY THE GOVERNMENTAL ENTITY HAVING STATE BUILDING CODE ENFORCEMENT JURISDICTION; AMENDING SECTION 20-6-622, MCA."

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MONTANA:

Section 1. Section 20-6-622, MCA, is amended to read:

"20-6-622. Review and approval of school building plans and specification. (1) No school building in-the-state, either publicly or privately owned or operated, in which students are housed or instructed shall may be built, enlarged, remodeled, or repaired until the plans and specifications for such construction that been submitted to and approved by the governmental entity having jurisdiction to enforce the state building code as it applies to the school building under Title 50, chapter 60, parts 1 through 4.

- (2) The plans and specifications <u>required in subsection (1)</u> shall show in detail the proposed construction of the building and shall illustrate and indicate conformity with the <u>rules</u> promulgated-by-the-department <u>state building code</u>.
- (3) As a service to districts, the superintendent of public instruction may review the plans and specifications submitted-to the-department-of-administration required in subsection (1) to assist the districts in designing facilities for optimum utilization."

WITNESS STATEMENT

Name Gary Steverwoold	Committee On
Address	Date
Representing OPP	Support
Bill No. HB-474	Oppose X
	Amend
AFTER TESTIFYING, PLEASE LEAVE PREPARED	STATEMENT WITH SECRETARY.
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Itemize the main argument or points of your testimony. This will assist the committee secretary with her minutes.

FORM CS-34 1-83

January 31

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Chairman.

SPEAKER:		
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COMMITTEE SECRETARY

Fritz Daily,

STATE PUB. CO.

Helena, Mont.

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COMMITTEE SECRETARY

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FRITA DAILY, Chairman.

		January		33
SPEAKER:				
We, your committee on	ND CULTURA	L RESOURCES		
ng had under consideration		KOUSE	Bill No.	457
first reading copy (white color				
color	•			
"AN ACT TO PROVIDE THAT THE C	CUSTY AND	STATE EQUALIZAT	NON.	
APPORTIGHMENT OF A SCECOL DIS	TRICT BE R	EDUCED BY 1/90t	h FOR	
EACH SCHOOL DAY THAT THE DIST		,		kale
OF 180 DAYS OF PUPIL INSTRUCT				••
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AMENDING SECTION 20-1-301, MC		4.		
pectfully report as follows: That		ROUSE	Bill No	457
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STATE PUB. CO.		Pritz Daily,	Chair	man.