

MINUTES

**MONTANA SENATE
55th LEGISLATURE - REGULAR SESSION**

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION & CULTURAL RESOURCES

Call to Order: By **CHAIRMAN DARYL TOEWS**, on February 17, 1997, at 3:27, in Room 402.

ROLL CALL

Members Present:

Sen. Daryl Toews, Chairman (R)
Sen. C.A. Casey Emerson, Vice Chairman (R)
Sen. Debbie Bowman Shea (D)
Sen. Steve Doherty (D)
Sen. Delwyn Gage (R)
Sen. Wm. E. "Bill" Glaser (R)
Sen. John R. Hertel (R)
Sen. Loren Jenkins (R)
Sen. Mike Sprague (R)
Sen. Barry "Spook" Stang (D)
Sen. Mignon Waterman (D)

Members Excused: None.

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Eddy McClure, Legislative Services Division
Janice Soft, Committee Secretary

Please Note: These are summary minutes. Testimony and discussion are paraphrased and condensed.

Committee Business Summary:

Hearing(s) & Date(s) Posted: HB 183, SB 357; Posted
02/13/97
Executive Action: None.

HEARING ON HB 183

Sponsor: REP. GAY ANN MASOLO, HD 40, Townsend

Proponents: Paul Spengler, Lewis & Clark County Disaster &
Emergency Services Coordinator
Jim Greene, Montana Disaster & Emergency Services
Bruce Suenram, Department of Justice
Gail Gray, Office of Public Instruction
Loran Frazier, School Administrators of Montana
Lance Melton, Montana School Boards Association

Opponents: None.

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

REP. GAY ANN MASOLO, HD 40, Townsend, said HB 183 had no fiscal impact, a lot of local control, and revised the laws regarding school fire and earthquake drills. She said HB 183 allowed schools to have eight disaster drills per year (four fire and four hazard), instead of currently eight fire and four earthquake drills. REP. MASOLO said schools would be allowed to identify hazards in their own particular districts and plan emergency drills to respond to them. She asked HB 183 BE CONCURRED IN.

Proponents' Testimony:

Paul Spengler, Lewis & Clark County Disaster & Emergency Services Coordinator, read his written testimony. (EXHIBIT 1)

Jim Greene, Montana Disaster & Emergency Services, said HB 183 gave schools flexibility to address their hazards. He said in some situations emergency help might not arrive until several hours after the disaster; therefore, drills for several types of hazards were necessary. He voiced support for HB 183.

Bruce Suenram, Department of Justice, expressed support for the bill. He said his department had been involved in reducing the number of drills required by state government. He urged the Committee's support.

Gail Gray, Office of Public Instruction (OPI), said OPI wanted to be on record as supporting HB 183 because they liked the aspect of local control. She said they had talked to fire marshals, disaster experts, etc., and all said it made sense.

Loran Frazier, School Administrators of Montana (SAM), said SAM wanted to go on record as supporting HB 183 because it made sense and added to the safety of children.

Lance Melton, Montana School Boards Association (MSBA), could not be there so he sent his oral testimony of support with Loran Frazier.

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Count: 3:34 p.m.}

Opponents' Testimony: None.

Questions From Committee Members and Responses:

SEN. DEBBIE SHEA referred to Section 3, Subsection (2), and asked if the distinction was between an alarm in class and an alarm to warn the students. REP. MASOLO said it was. SEN. SHEA asked about keeping the controls under lock and key. REP. MASOLO said it was to ensure students did not falsely set off the alarm.

Closing by Sponsor:

REP. GAY ANN MASOLO said preparedness for any type of disaster was the best answer and local decision was the best. She asked HB 183 BE CONCURRED IN.

HEARING ON SB 357

Sponsor: SEN. BARRY "SPOOK" STANG, SD 35, St. Regis

Proponents: Larry Regnier, Superior Schools
Claire Venn, All Ready Program, Wyoming
Raelene Shreve, All Ready Program, Wyoming
Linda Carlsen, St. Regis Schools
Kari Labbe, All Ready Preschool, Superior
Bill Woodford, Superior School District
Julie Bullard, University of Montana--Dillon
Donna Chambers, Superior Schools
Gail Gray, Office of Public Instruction
Scot Anderson, Missoula Head Start
Linda Wood, All Ready Program, Superior
Jon Filz, Victor
Randy Hitz, Montana State University-Bozeman
Loran Frazier, School Administrators of Montana
Lance Melton, Montana School Boards Association
Billie Warford, Early Childhood Project
Susan Wilson, All Ready Preschool, St. Regis
Lee Murphy, All Ready Preschool, Superior

Opponents: None.

Opening Statement by Sponsor:

SEN. BARRY "SPOOK" STANG, SD 36, St. Regis, said SB 357 would establish a Montana prekindergarten program, committee and trust in order to start prekindergartens. He explained the Fact Sheet (EXHIBIT 2). SEN. STANG said both he and SEN. JOHN HARP, whose signature was also on the bill, believed finding money for the program in SB 357 would reap savings in the future.

Proponents' Testimony:

Larry Regnier, Superior Schools, said he had been a school superintendent for 22 years and experienced frustration in trying to react to daily situations with regard to at-risk situations; primarily, youth entering the adolescent arena. He wondered why schools were not being proactive in trying to find answers to the problems. Mr. Regnier said he had brainstorming sessions with two educators who had put together a program for early childhood intervention; they would share their experiences in a few moments. He referred to (EXHIBIT 2), Investment Return, and to an article in "Time" magazine which indicated remedial education would be more effective at ages 3-4 than at 9 or 10, and good, affordable day care was not a luxury or fringe benefit for

welfare mothers. **Mr. Regnier** suggested the primary impetus of SB 357 was to deal with at-risk youth who usually did not get support or help until their adolescent years. He said another major component was parent involvement because that was essential in the long-term success of the program, i.e. learning how to teach their children and sometimes even learning to read with their children.

Claire Venn and Raelene Shreve, All Ready Program, Casper, Wyoming, shared in their testimony from (EXHIBITS 3 & 4).

{Tape: 1; Side: A; Approx. Time Count: 3:52 p.m.}

Linda Carlsen, St. Regis, read her written testimony. (EXHIBIT 5)

Kari Labbe, All Ready Preschool Program, Superior, read her written testimony. (EXHIBIT 6)

Allan Labbe, Superior Schools, sent written testimony with **Kari Labbe.** (EXHIBIT 7)

Ruth Woodall, Private Citizen, sent written testimony with **Kari Labbe.** (EXHIBIT 8)

Bill Woodford, Superior Schools, said SB 357 had the potential of improving education. He said there seemed to be a gap in services provided to preschool children, explaining there were no clear standards for skills needed by kindergarten children to have positive, successful, first-educational experience. **Mr. Woodford** suggested that lack made the role of the kindergarten teacher extremely challenging, in that he or she must take a diverse group of five-year-olds and have them ready for the first grade by June. He said a structured preschool program would help that disparity because students would learn what was needed for success, i.e. respect, responsibility, ability to work with others and introductory academic skills. However, teacher involvement was not always enough; parents needed to be involved as well, and SB 357 required parents work in the classroom a minimum of two hours per week. **Mr. Woodford** urged support for SB 357 because it was the right thing to do for kids.

Julie Bullard, University of Montana - Dillon, expressed support for SB 357 because there were benefits in serving children in the preschool years. She reported studies showed if children were in quality early childhood programs, they tended to have a higher IQ, higher achievement, higher graduation rate; if in addition, there was an very active parent component, the delinquency was less and lifetime earning potential was greater. **Ms. Bullard** said if the discrepancy was greater between home and school, there was a greater effect. She informed the Committee a study had been done regarding an economic investment return, and it was found one year of a quality early childhood program was an extraordinarily economic buy. She said the "catch" was the

programs needed to be extremely high quality, and many programs were not; in fact, a study showed about 70% of the preschool programs compromised the children's readiness to learn upon entering school. **Ms. Bullard** said the ingredients of a quality program included adequate teacher salaries and training as early childhood specialists. She stated Montana had no regulation in setting up preschool programs, including health/safety and staff qualifications. She expressed approval of the inclusion of Head Start standards, parent involvement and developmentally-appropriate curriculum. **Ms. Bullard** suggested the following modifications: (1) OPI or higher education administer the program; (2) Be sure the committee contained early childhood specialists. She urged support for SB 357, with her suggested modifications.

Donna Chambers, Superior Schools, said she had seen society change drastically over her 28-year teaching career and felt

{Tape: 1; Side: B; Approx. Time Count: 4:14 p.m.}

SB 357 would help children view school as a happy, safe environment. **Ms. Chambers** stated she felt the parent part was the most important and saw the program being associated with the school system as a positive. She suggested the program would also help to diagnose problems earlier and to get help before remedial programs were necessary.

Gail Gray, Office of Public Instruction (OPI), said Montana had many children at risk and such children usually did not achieve well in school. She voiced support for the bill.

Scot Anderson, Missoula Head Start, read his written testimony. (EXHIBIT 9)

Linda Wood, All Ready Program, Superior, said she had seen children in many situations because of her varied involvement with them. She expressed enthusiasm for four words in the program: intervention, prevention, partner and asset. She said children were the greatest asset because they were our present and future. **Ms. Wood** reiterated how the partnership between the educators and parents at any level was vital, including the planning sessions. She asked for Committee's DO PASS on SB 357.

Jon Filz, Head Start Director, Ravalli County, said he served 87 children in a Head Start Program and last year 161 parents had served 10,000 hours through parent involvement. He said parents worked on curriculum design with teachers, made some management decisions and spent hours in the classroom. He urged support for the bill.

Randy Hitz, Montana State University-Bozeman, read his written testimony. (EXHIBIT 10)

{Tape: 1; Side: B; Approx. Time Count: 4:26 p.m.}

Loran Frazier, School Administrators of Montana (SAM), expressed strong belief for the concept that prevention was the best way to tackle some of our social problems; research proved the earlier the intervention, the better the results. **Mr. Frazier** declared approval for the 60-40 mix because it was more realistic than some of the Head Start programs. However, he also voiced some concerns, i.e. the administration of the program and said SAM would support the concerns in that area already noted. He urged support for SB 357.

Lance Melton, Montana School Boards Association (MSBA), was unable to attend, but sent oral support with **Loran Frazier**.

Billie Warford, Early Childhood Project, voiced delight that SB 357 was presented for the Committee's consideration. She referred to a report prepared for the Governor which addressed prevention and concern over what was happening to our children and families, and solutions to those problems. She cited a quote from the report, "Quality early childhood education is the best drug prevention program we have in the state." She urged the Committee to remember that when considering SB 357, as well as the makeup of the Committee and from where the money would come. **Ms. Warford** suggested it might be appropriate for funds to come from the Corrections Budget because the program would be preventative.

Susan Wilson, All Ready Preschool, St. Regis, expressed strong support for SB 357 because she was the parent of four children and had a vested interest in the public school system. She shared examples of kindergarten children who had never had a simple question answered at home, could not speak in complete sentences or could not sit quietly to listen to someone else. **Ms. Wilson** maintained it was time for the state to step in and intervene as soon as possible, maintaining this program nurtured the parent-child bond, which in turn benefited the child and community. She said every parent wanted to do the best for his or her child but some parents needed guidance in this. **Ms. Wilson** said parents spending time every week in school with their child(ren) was a good habit which would last a lifetime. She declared Montana had a wonderful opportunity to enhance the lives of all its children; spending money early on kids could only bring great results.

Lee Murphy, Parent, said her child had been in the All Ready Preschool for only two weeks but she could already see results in the child's ability to sit quietly, learning, respect and responsibility. She said the effects were far-reaching and she enjoyed being in the classroom with her child. She asked for DO PASS.

Opponents' Testimony: None.

{Tape: 1; Side: B; Approx. Time Count: 4:32 p.m.}

Questions From Committee Members and Responses:

SEN. DEBBIE SHEA asked if kids would be denied access to the program if the parents could not spend two hours per week in the classroom. **Larry Regnier** said if parents were not involved, the skills learned by the kids would not carry over any more than those learned in a regular classroom. He stated the research showed the nucleus of what worked on a long-term basis was parent involvement and working with their children; therefore, if parents could not be involved on the basis of two hours per week, the child(ren) would be denied access. **SEN. BARRY "SPOOK" STANG** commented he had heard of a situation where one of the parents worked at a bank who gave the employee time off in order to be with the child at school, and advertised that fact.

SEN. SHEA asked if the funds would be in competition with Head Start. **SEN. STANG** said SB 357 contained no funding; at this time, it just established a trust fund. He stated both he and **SEN. JOHN HARP** would like to find funding, possibly through the Corrections Budget. **SEN. STANG** commented the funds would not be in competition with Head Start; in fact, the program would complement Head Start.

SEN. SHEA asked if the Board of Control would be the agency. **SEN. STANG** said the funding would not come from the Board of Crime Control; however, one thing the bill missed was the administrative costs should have been given to the agency who ran it. He said **SEN. HARP** and he were looking for some place besides OPI and thought the Board of Crime Control might be appropriate. He explained they thought the proposal was important enough to not get it mixed up with the legislative politics dealing with OPI.

SEN. STEVE DOHERTY asked if SB 357 just set up the framework to dish the money out, i.e. no money, no dish, and **SEN. STANG** agreed.

SEN. DOHERTY asked who would be eligible for the grants. **SEN. STANG** said nonsectarian, private schools, Head Start, existing school systems; however, criteria set by the Board which was appointed by the Governor would have to be met.

SEN. DOHERTY asked if home schools could apply. **SEN. STANG** said they would need to have at least six children.

SEN. DOHERTY asked the difference between that program and Head Start. **Raeleen Shreve** said Head Start served only children who met the federal guidelines of poverty while their program met the needs of children, regardless of their financial background. Another difference was their program had the parent component while Head Start did not.

SEN. MIKE SPRAGUE referred to Section 9, Subsection (4), and asked if the Committee would be set up before the money was

allocated. **SEN. STANG** said the Committee would be set up and paid from money found somewhere in this session; if that was not feasible, the Committee would probably be set up and never meet because there would be no grants. He commented legislators were purposely left off the Committee so a daily wage would not need to be paid.

SEN. SPRAGUE asked what Head Start was not doing which made this program a necessity, or could Head Start be incorporated into this bill. **Jon Filz** said SB 357 provided for a much greater number of children because 90% of the children served by Head Start were at or below the federal poverty level. **Mr. Filz** said parent involvement was required by Head Start; however, Head Start could not demand it, so "carrots" were used to encourage the involvement.

SEN. MIGNON WATERMAN asked if the minimum of six children in a home school situation would have to include a mix of disabilities, etc. **SEN. STANG** affirmed.

SEN. WATERMAN expressed concern over the two hours in the classroom, wondering if a parent could come in at night, should daytime be an impossibility, to do some things for the classroom. **Raeleen Shreve** said they provided opportunities for parents to do things with their children at home, which met the two-hour requirements, because the goal was to teach the parents how to teach their children. She said they also offered opportunities for employers to look at the program.

SEN. WATERMAN asked if the two hours could be done at home. **Ms. Shreve** said they did not watch the clock; rather, if the parents needed to do some things at home, they were provided with a structured outline.

MRS. WATERMAN asked if the Head Start Collaboration Grant would fit in with this program. **Scot Anderson** said the Grant was a planning Grant which would enable Head Start programs to work more cooperatively with other community resources; however, it was not direct service money. He explained it was related, but would not substitute as a funding source for the program in SB 357.

SEN. WATERMAN asked if the Committee's getting organized and working with communities to develop their proposals would fall within that Collaboration Grant. **Scot Anderson** said it would be permissible.

{Tape: 1; Side: B; Approx. Time Count: 4:51 p.m.}

SEN. CASEY EMERSON asked if any great advantages had been gained from Head Start and kindergarten. **SEN. BARRY "SPOOK" STANG** said his personal experience, both with himself and his children, was there had been an advantage. **SEN. EMERSON** said he was looking at it from total society's viewpoint. **SEN. STANG** said he grew up in

a home where both parents worked, so he was in kindergarten when he was not in day care. Also, his children grew up in a two-working-parent family, and while there was no prekindergarten, some day care providers worked with the children in their reading and numbers. **SEN. EMERSON** asked if this could go down to the one-or-two-year olds in the future. **SEN. STANG** said if it would help, save money in the long run and make better children, he would support it.

SEN. JOHN HERTEL asked what the standards would be for those involved in teaching the children. **Larry Regnier** said there would have to be a very clearly, well-defined evaluation process within the program context itself. As to the certification of the teachers and directors, early childhood specialists would be ideal; however, at present there was not enough postsecondary emphasis to say there was a broad range of early childhood specialists available. Therefore, **Mr. Regnier** suggested a minimum qualification of teacher-certified, with some emphasis in early childhood education; yet, if a private venture made application and had expertise but not certification, the Committee could make the determination to approve or disapprove the grant.

Closing by Sponsor:

SEN. BARRY "SPOOK" STANG said the more he heard about the program, the more he believed in it because he believed a proactive response was being taken, which would save money now as well as in the future. He stressed again this program was open to both the public and private sectors, and had received national recognition through contact from the offices of both Vice President Al Gore and Representative Rick Hill. **SEN. STANG** said a great deal of Montana's budget would be spent on corrections, but a program like this could save money in that area because of early intervention and prevention. He urged DO PASS from the Committee.

ADJOURNMENT

Adjournment: The meeting adjourned at 4:58 p.m.



SEN. DARYL TOEWS, Chairman



JANICE SOFT, Secretary

DT/JS