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ROLL NUMBER

DESCRIPTION

2270

2001 SENATE EDUCATION

SB 2270

2001 SENATE STANDING COMMITTEE MINUTES

BILL/RESOLUTION NO. SB 2270

Senate Education Committee

Conference Committee

Hearing Date 02-05-01

Tape Number	Side A	Side B	Meter #
1	x		43.8 - end
1		x	0 - end
2	x		0 - 28.7
1 (2-12-01)	x		33.5 - end
1 (2-12-01)		x	0 - 14.8
1 (2-13-01)	x		29 - 43.8
1 (2-13-01)		x	9.9 - end
2 (2-13-01)	x		0 - 4.9
2 (2-14-01)	x		30.1 - end
2 (2-14-01)		x	0 - 25.5
Committee Clerk Signature <i>Anders Johnson</i>			

Minutes: **CHAIRMAN FREBORG** called the hearing on SB 2270 relating to the provision of all grade levels by school districts. The hearing was held in the Brynhild Haugland Room.

Testimony in support of SB 2270:

SENATOR GRINDBERG, District 41, spoke in support of the bill. He presented an overview of the bill. (see attached). In explaining the bill he stated his intention is not to close existing schools, but to look at ways of efficiency and to look at the future and the challenges that face our state. In subsection 3, schools on military bases are exempt (NDCC 15.1-08). In the next five years there will be 12, 800 fewer students in the state. This is a critical issue for ND, and he does support the local decisions on this issue. Because of the dynamics and demographics of our

state, it is prudent for the citizens of ND and the legislature to talk about these challenges objectively and look at the issues and what is best for the students of this state. Why is ND growing at such a slow pace? Several reasons for this. North Dakota has typically paid the least to get by. He feels the young people move out of state due to low wages. According to the roundtable discussions, the status of North Dakotans is they don't want to see others succeed. The issue now is declining enrollment in our schools. What is the public policy on declining enrollment. We need to look at what is best for ND. We need to check all options, including the Governor's proposal. This bill does not close any schools. SENATOR KELSH asked how this bill would affect schools working in a cooperative effort. SENATOR GRINDBERG stated that if they have cooperative efforts and things are working out and they have efficiencies that have brought them to the point of collaborating, this bill might allow them to merge and continue to operate the same way.

REPRESENTATIVE HAAS, District 36, spoke in support of the bill. (see attached). He also distributed a handout on school district reorganization recommended timeline. (see attached). There are options in the dissolution process. There is good technical assistance available from DPI. North Dakota needs to embrace the necessary changes and move forward or it will stagnate while the world passes it by.

REPRESENTATIVE NOTTESTAD, District 43, spoke in support of the bill. North Dakota still has 51 K - 8 school districts. He stated we need to bring a norm to North Dakota of K - 12 schooling. He has an amendment (see attached) to address the border towns of ND which will assure them that the arrangements they have in place will remain, and they will still have the option of attending schools in the other state as is necessary. There is no guarantee that the

cross-border arrangements will always be there. Passage of this bill would be a huge step to help in the efficiency of delivering education to K - 12 in ND.

REPRESENTATIVE LAUREL THORESON, District 13, testified in support of the bill. He feels we are in a crisis situation in ND with numbers. We have to work together as a community (all North Dakota) to supply the best education for our students. He feels money alone won't solve the problems (declining enrollment, teacher shortage, etc.) facing ND, but through working together and through education of the people, the problems can be resolved.

SENATOR CHRISTENSON, District 18, presented testimony in support of the bill. (see attached).

TOM DECKER, DPI, stated this bill is redefining local control. Local control will still exist in these areas if this bill is adopted. A different group of school board members will be making decisions about school districts. They will be making decisions in an environment large enough to have long-term viability and the financial base to operate a district. This bill addresses how to more equitably address declining enrollment and share resources. In looking at the transportation issue, he stated that children can be transported to their school within an hour if the transportation is set up properly. Because of the emotional involvement on this issue, DPI would ask the legislators to focus on the policy issues, on what is best for most of ND's students, and on distribution of taxable assets that will allow those districts in ND that will be needed forever as K - 12 locations to continue to function effectively with adequate resources. On the issue of the 51 K - 8 districts, he feels they will not dissolve voluntarily or consolidate willingly. The legislature may want to set up a process whereby new local boards can appeal to DPI on a decision to dissolve or consolidate. He feels the timeline of 6/30/02 is workable. Reorganization usually takes place between districts that are equal so he feels most of the 51 districts would go

through dissolution. This bill is part of rethinking about redistributing taxable assets and redistributing resources available to bring greater equity to educational funding across ND. We need to look at districts having long-term viability. Many ND school districts are now in a "survival" mode and are not in position to make decisions that are in the long-term best interests of the asset distribution for ND. There continues to be a significant difference between all ND districts in K - 8 in expenditure per pupil, in levy effort and disparity in levies, and it is in all those areas significantly greater when in K - 8 districts across the state than in K-12.

Testimony in opposition to SB 2270:

RICHARD RAY, Administrator in Manvel, ND, which is a K - 8 school with 186 children. He stated this issue is emotional and is not about the quality of education. He further feels it is about local control and about neighborhood schools. He questions how small districts are not paying their own way. He wants the "neighborhood" school kept in the district. He fears the closure of small schools with this bill. He thinks it is easier to educate K - 8 in a small town, and 9 - 12 in a larger school. He stated they already have consolidation and feels within the next 5 years, much more of it will take place. He thinks the local school boards will close their school if they can not do the job of educating the students (based on money issues and quality of instruction), but it should be a natural process. He feels this bill addresses too many school districts not too many schools.

GARY EVANS, Principal Golva Elementary School, feels small schools lead to pride. (see attached testimony). Beach, with 200 students in the high school, provides the same education standards as a larger school.

SHERILYN JOHNSON, Principal Almont Public School, presented testimony. (see attached).

SENATOR KELSH asked how she feels about the cost of administration for the small school.

She stated that in addition to her administrative salary, she also receives salary as a teacher of 7th and 8th grade students.

DEAN BARD, NDSOS, stated they feel the local district should be in charge of changing the districts boundaries. This is stated in the NDSOS Legislative Program pamphlet. He further stated that the admitting district would be the ones to bus the students.

KEITH ROCKEMAN, school board president of Bowline Butte School District #19, presented testimony. (see attached testimony). He feels if this bill passes it will mean the closure of his school. SENATOR COOK asked how many students are in this school. There are 4 students in the elementary school. Several high school students attend in another town. The elementary school is a one room school with one instructor.

JIM GROSS, Litchville/Marion School District, presented testimony. (see attached). He feels the cooperative agreement is working well in their district. They pool all their resources together and the elementary pays their share (the first year the elementary paid more than the high school). Their district covers 600 square miles and they have 7 buses. The local districts worked out this agreement and it is working.

SCOTT BUXBAUM, School Board President, East Fairview Elem. School, presented testimony (see attached).

KAY OLSON, Mapleton, feels there are many tools available to help communities grow but a community needs at least K - 6 to attract them.

TIM DWYER, Sidney, MT, feels there are two issues here: 1. Local control, 2. Children's education. He feels the local input can do a better job than a large district.

LOIS ANDERSON, County Superintendent Slope/Bowman counties, presented testimony. (see attached).

KATIE LUTHER, Sweet Briar school, presented testimony. (see attached).

PATTY LEWIS, ND Farm Bureau, feels the local districts will do consolidating when needed (she cited the fact that in the early 1940's there were over 2000 school districts and now ND has just over 200).

WAYNE STANLEY, Principal at South Prairie School, Minot, feels this backfires on consolidation because as the declining enrollments hit the smaller schools, and they look at what is best for their high school kids, if their enrollment gets below 50 - 60 students, is it in their best interest to turn around and say they will operate a K - 8 and send their high school students to a high school district just as South Prairie does. He feels if this bill passes, it will eliminate the opportunity to do this. The town will face the question of consolidating and close right now, lose our town and the viability in it, or do they go along with raising the mill levy and other money to keep the education on the local level.

CHUCK MILLER, Nedrose Elementary School, Minot, the largest graded elementary in the state, stated that most administrators do teach in the school also. They feel this is a local school even though there are 248 students. This is a local issue, and he is confident the people of ND will make the right decision.

Testimony in opposition to SB 2270 presented to the clerk from:

Sheldon Public School Board

Nancy Grosulak, School Board member from Billings County

Gary Pennington, Horse Creek School Dist. President

John Winter, School Board member at Horse Creek

Kay Hatter, President Earl School Board

CHAIRMAN FREBORG closed the hearing on SB 2270.

02-12-01, Tape 1, Side A, 33.5 - end, Side B, 0 - 14.8

SENATOR FREBORG stated he would like to change the date to 2004.

SENATOR O'CONNELL moved an amendment to change the date to 2004. Seconded by SENATOR COOK. SENATOR KELSH stated he sees no reason to adopt this change. He feels the legislature will be back in 2003 and could make changes then.

Roll Call Vote: 6 YES. 1 NO. 0 Absent. Amendment adopted.

SENATOR FREBORG stated he would accept an amendment that states the patrons of the original district, after reorganization, would have to vote to close their school. Otherwise the school will remain open. This would put all the land in a high school (K - 12) district. Committee discussion. Fear that maybe a large school would try to do away with the small school. SENATOR FREBORG stated he has listened to testimony in the past and now where the people have a fear their small school will be shut down. This offers protection for that.

SENATOR COOK moved an amendment that the original district would have to vote to close their school. Seconded by SENATOR O'CONNELL.

Discussion followed. TOM DECKER, DPI, answered questions for the committee.

Roll Call Vote: 7 YES. 0 NO. 0 Absent. Amendment adopted.

SENATOR COOK moved a DO PASS as Amended. Seconded by SENATOR CHRISTENSON. SENATOR KELSH feels this will hurt small districts. He feels reorganizing has been done when the interests of the students is best served. He also feels this issue will be addressed in the next Legislative session. SENATOR COOK believes with the

