



March 4, 2011

“Florida-style” education bills considered by House Education Committee

This week the House Education Committee held hearings on bills that mirror education policies that were proposed and passed into Florida law during the tenure of former Florida Governor Jeb Bush. Committee co-chair Matt Wingard (R-Wilsonville) presided over a week-long series of hearings that included presentations from the Foundation for Excellence in Education outlining the impacts on student achievement brought about by Florida education policies over the past decade.

The proposed reforms to Oregon’s K-12 school system are contained in six bills:

House Bill 2289 – Requires all schools in Oregon to be assessed a letter grade A through F. Scholarships would be provided to students who attend schools that receive an “F” grade to attend a private school of their choice. The scholarships would be funded out of the State School Fund and serve as vouchers to be used at any religious or non-religious private school.

House Bill 2290 – Creates the Special Needs Scholarship Program Fund and allows a student with an Individualized Education Plan (IEP) to attend any public or private school that is willing to enroll the student. The monies provided by the State School Fund follow the student to the public or private school of their choosing.

House Bill 2291 – Creates Oregon state tax credits for contributions to scholarship granting organizations that provide scholarships to low-income students to attend private or public schools.

House Bill 2292 – Allows individuals with a doctorate degree, who hold a teaching license from another state or who have passed subject area tests, to receive an initial Oregon teaching license.

House Bill 2293 – Requires that all first, second and third grade students be given a reading skills assessment. Third grade students who are more than one grade level behind in reading comprehension would be required to be retained in the third grade. While the bill is described as an end to “social promotion,” many students would likely be exempted from the retention provision in the bill, including special education students and English language learners.

House Bill 2294 – Gives school dis-

tricts an additional .2 weight in the state school funding formula for every student who scores a “3” or better on an Advanced Placement exam. The additional SSF funds would be used to pay bonuses to teachers of AP courses and directed to the high schools with the AP students scoring a “3” or better.

House Bill 3549 – Allows some professionals to teach in Oregon public schools without TSPC licensure.

While there have been notable achievement gains for fourth graders in Florida over the past decade, OSBA Legislative and Public Affairs Specialist Morgan Allen noted that those gains have not been sustained when students are tested again in the eighth grade. He also reiterated OSBA’s opposition to any mechanism that diverts public funds to private or religious schools or erodes financial support for the public school system. The Education Committee also heard that Florida made a significant financial investment in these programs.

House Revenue Committee hears local option referral

This week the House Revenue Committee heard testimony on **House Joint Resolution 26**. The resolution is a constitutional referral to voters that would allow local option levies for schools and local governments to exceed the Measures 5 and 50 limits and avoid “compression.” It would also allow voters to consider new local option levies that would last up to 10 years instead of the current five-year limit; voters could renew the levy at the eight-year mark.

Since Oregon voters approved limits and caps on property tax rates, the majority of funding for public schools has shifted to the state and more school districts are considering tools like the local option to help make up for inadequate state funding support. OSBA Legislative and Public Affairs Specialist Morgan Allen testified in favor of HJR 26, telling the committee that OSBA supports granting authority to

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K-12 funds in budget rebalance approved

This week the Senate gave bipartisan final approval to a series of bills appropriating \$77 million to complete the rebalance of the 2009-2011 budget.

The bills included a \$35.5 million allocation for schools, as well as funding for prisons, the Oregon Youth Authority and programs that provide assistance for seniors and other vulnerable Oregonians. This action maintains the \$5.756 billion funding level for K-12 schools for the current biennium and protects the services outlined by state leaders at the last meeting of the Legislative Emergency Board in December. The bills had previously been approved by the House on a unanimous vote; their passage fulfills an agreement from last fall that critical services would be protected to the greatest extent possible.

Passage of the rebalance bills completes the legislative work which began in May 2010 when the quarterly revenue forecast revealed a sudden \$577 million drop in expected revenues. In the intervening months, former Governor Kulongoski used his allotment authority to make across-the-board cuts to state agency budgets while the Legislative Emergency Board made use of limited reserves to protect vital services.

The five bills approved by the Senate Tuesday now go to Governor Kitzhaber for his signature.

2011-13 budget update

Unlike past legislative sessions, the Legislature this year plans to build its budget off the February revenue forecast. Previously, the May forecast has been used. Legislative leaders plan to use the February revenue levels and build funding levels back up if the May forecast is significantly improved. The key vehicle for the Legislature’s 2011-13 budget plan will be the Ways and Means co-chairs’ budget, expected sometime later this month.

Sen. Richard Devlin (D-Tualatin), Senate Ways and Means co-chair, stated that his top priority is working with his House co-

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Budget update – *Continued*

chairs, Rep. Peter Buckley (D-Ashland) and Rep. Dennis Richardson (R-Central Point), to produce a balanced budget proposal.

Devlin said, “With no significant revenue generators on the horizon, depleted reserve funds, reduced federal funding and increasing demand for services, we can no longer provide services at the same level as we have in the past. Despite the difficult decisions that must be made in the coming months, I plan to maintain my focus on creating jobs, educating children and protecting the most vulnerable Oregonians.”

Local option referral – *Continued*

school districts to ask voters for supplemental operating revenue from a variety of sources like the local option. OSBA also supports lifting the arbitrary limits and compression created by Measures 5 and 50.

Other supporters of the resolution include Portland Public Schools, the League of Oregon Cities, and the Oregon Education Association. They noted that schools and local governments need flexibility to find local funding solutions that address budget shortfalls and allow local voters to determine the appropriate levels of public safety, education and other basic services.

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Kevin McCann, executive director
Tricia Yates, associate executive director of legislative and public affairs, editor
Morgan Allen and Lori Sattenspiel, legislative and public affairs specialists
Jenny Fedler, legislative and public affairs assistant
Judy Bennett & Diane Efsseff, design & production
Dan Peterson, printing manager



Key bills for the week of March 7

These key bills are scheduled for hearings by the House Education Committee.

Monday, March 7

1:00 p.m., Hearing Room E, State Capitol

HB 2750 – *First public hearing*

Allows district board to adopt policy for use of alcoholic beverages in culinary arts classes taught at school.

HB 2649 – *First public hearing*

Establishes Task Force on School Libraries.

HB 2732 – *First public hearing*

Requires student to complete and submit an application for apprenticeship program or post-secondary education institution in order to receive high school diploma.

HB 2180 – *First public hearing*

Requires school district to submit written plan of instruction for talented and gifted children to Superintendent of Public Instruction.

HB 3463 – *First public hearing*

Increases amount Department of Education may expend from State School Fund to provide administration of support for development of talented and gifted education.

Wednesday, March 9

1:00 p.m., Hearing Room E, State Capitol

HB 2286 – *First public hearing*

Directs Department of Education to develop grant program for high school dropout prevention programs administered by school districts.

HB 3197 – *First public hearing*

Requires district school board to adopt attendance notification policy.

HB 3550 – *First public hearing*

Requires resident school district of student to approve admission of student in

another school district if certain conditions are met.

HB 3555 – *First public hearing*

Allows person without administrative license to be superintendent, or assistant superintendent, of public school, public charter school or virtual public charter school.

HJR 24 – *First public hearing*

Urges school districts to require students to successfully complete financial literacy course prior to graduation.

HJR 36 – *First public hearing*

Urges school districts to require students to successfully complete course in civics education prior to graduation from high school.

Friday, March 11

1:00 p.m., Hearing Room E, State Capitol

HB 2512 – *First public hearing*

Establishes Task Force on Classroom Spending.

HB 2514 – *First public hearing*

Modifies method by which length of service of probationary teachers is calculated.

HB 3117 – *First public hearing*

Provides that school district is not required to comply with requirement imposed by state unless funding is specifically provided to facilitate compliance with requirement.

HB 3298 – *First public hearing*

Provides that governing body of county is district boundary board for purposes of boundary changes and mergers of school districts.

For more information on these bills, go to <http://www.osba.org/Resources/Article/Legislative/BillTracking.aspx>.