



### **House K-12 Education Bill**

Last night the House passed the K-12 Education Omnibus bill off the floor on an 86 to 47 vote. There was extensive discussion and several amendments. The first amendment offered to the bill was by Rep. Greiling. Her amendment removed the provisions codifying the aid payment deferral and property tax recognition shift. She said those provisions were being held back at this time and would become part of the final budget balancing bill later this week assuming leadership and the Governor can negotiate a new deal after Pawlenty's veto of the last budget balancing bill.

Rep. Davnie successfully added an amendment to address concerns by the 34 districts seeking school improvement grants from the Department of Education. The issue of the lowest performing schools is having to remove their principals and teachers to as part of the school turn around grants. Last week the House Education Policy committee took testimony from administrators across the state who are frustrated with the MDE claim that they have to fire everyone in the building to participate in these grants. Although it is unsure how this will work with the federal grant, there was discussion about the uniqueness of districts and how they came to be identified originally.

Rep. Mariani added an amendment that will require districts to evaluate teachers and principals each year. The evaluations will be developed locally and are to include multiple measures for evaluation. Districts had argued the proposal creates a substantial burden and may not be workable in some instances including small schools with only one principal. The evaluation proposal also appears to be a core piece of QComp, leading some to argue that under the new mandate districts and bargaining units not in QComp should find their way into the program to at least get the state revenue that is available for these efforts.

Rep. Westrom was unsuccessful in getting two amendments passed. At the request of his area superintendents he offered an amendment to allow schools to post board minutes and other notices on their website instead of having to publish them in a local newspaper. The Newspaper lobby has successfully defeated this effort in the past and they were successful once again. The other amendment offered by Rep. Westrom would have allowed local boards by a 60% vote to opt-out of any unfunded mandates. Rep. Greiling argued that this would get us in trouble with the feds over special education and the amendment was defeated.

Race To The Top and the Governor's education reforms were offered as a comprehensive amendment to the education bill. In the end the DFL House held the line and kept the proposals out of the bill. One amendment in particular, alternative licensure or Teach for America, took

substantial time. On a 65-68 vote the proposal was defeated.

The House Education bill is now in the Senate's hands, but at this time it is unclear as to whether or not the Senate is going to move a separate education policy/finance bill. There is a proposal, but it is sitting in the Senate Rules committee chaired by the Senate Majority Leader Larry Pogemiller. Sen. Pogemiller is not inclined to move the bill forward due to controversial items in the bill, namely the Governor's education reforms opposed by Education Minnesota. At this point it doesn't look like there will be a separate education policy bill.

### **Budget Balancing Part II**

House and Senate leadership continue to meet with Governor Pawlenty to come up with a \$3 billion budget solution. In reality they have agreed to \$2.6 billion which is basically a codification of the Governor's unallotments that were ruled illegal by the supreme court last week. The remaining \$400 million or so will hopefully be solved by new Medicaid funding, but it isn't clear when the feds will send that our way. Minnesota leaders have until midnight Sunday to pass any legislation under constitutional restrictions. Look for a budget deal to be announced sometime on Saturday.