

Friday, January 4, 2008

**'Public Forum' of the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs**

Room 202, Cross State Office Building, Augusta. 9:04AM – 1:21PM

[Summary: Brian Hubbell, for MDISchools.net]

Today's parade of legislators proved to be substantially less grinding than the Education Committee's schedule and ground rules were prepared to withstand.

Of the 45 invited legislators who had submitted bill requests related to school reform to the legislative council last October, perhaps more than a few heeded Committee Chair Representative Norton's warning that "if your only issue is repeal, feel free NOT to take your five minutes."

Rather, Representative Norton advised, legislators were to restrict presentations to only their "most heart-burning issue" and to accompany any critique with a proposed solution that the Committee could consider to include in its own subsequent work.

Over the course of the day, the Committee heard from 22 legislators whose recommendations could be categorized as follows:

**Repeal**

- Rep Eaton (Gouldsboro, Hancock, Lamoine, Sorrento, Sullivan, Waltham and Winter Harbor)
- Rep Schatz (Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Penobscot, Sedgwick and Surry)
- Senator Raye (Addison, Alexander, Baileyville, Baring Plantation, Beals, Beddington, Calais, Centerville, Charlotte, Cherryfield, Codyville Plantation, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Cooper, Crawford, Cutler, Danforth, Deblois, Dennysville, East Machias, Eastport, Grand Lake Stream Plantation, Harrington, Jonesboro, Jonesport, Lubec, Machias, Machiasport, Marshfield, Meddybemps, Milbridge, Northfield, Passamaquoddy Indian Township, Passamaquoddy Pleasant Point, Pembroke, Perry, Princeton, Robbinston, Roque Bluffs, Steuben, Talmadge, Topsfield, Vanceboro, Waite, Wesley, Whiting and Whitneyville, Eastbrook, Franklin, Great Pond, Osborn and Waltham, Carroll Plantation, Drew Plantation, Lakeville)
- Senator Sherman (Amity, Ashland, Bancroft, Blaine, Bridgewater, Cary Plantation, E Plantation, Chapman, Crystal, Dyer Brook, Easton, Fort Fairfield, Glenwood Plantation, Hammond, Haynesville, Hersey, Hodgdon, Houlton, Island Falls, Linneus, Littleton, Ludlow, Macwahoc Plantation, Mars Hill, Masardis, Merrill, Monticello, Moro Plantation, New Limerick, Oakfield, Orient, Oxbow Plantation, Presque Isle, Reed Plantation, Sherman, Smyrna, Westfield and Weston.)
- Senator Weston (Belfast, Belmont, Brooks, Burnham, Frankfort, Freedom, Islesboro, Jackson, Knox, Liberty, Lincolnville, Monroe, Montville, Morrill, Northport, Palermo, Prospect, Searsmont, Searsport, Stockton Springs, Swanville, Thorndike, Troy, Unity, Waldo and Winterport.)

**Broaden the range of acceptable reforms to include, for example, RSUs modeled after school unions or "USAs":**

- Rep. MacDonald, Boothbay (Arrowsic, Boothbay, Boothbay Harbor, Georgetown, Southport and Westport Island)
- Rep Eaton (Gouldsboro, Hancock, Lamoine, Sorrento, Sullivan, Waltham and Winter Harbor)
- Rep Edgecomb (Caribou)
- Rep Schatz (Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Penobscot, Sedgwick and Surry)
- Rep Pingree (Brooklin, Deer Isle, Frenchboro, Isle au Haut, Mount Desert (part), North Haven, Stonington, Swan's Island, Tremont and Vinalhaven)
- Senator Raye (Addison, Alexander, Baileyville, Baring Plantation, Beals, Beddington, Calais, Centerville, Charlotte, Cherryfield, Codyville Plantation, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Cooper, Crawford, Cutler, Danforth, Deblois, Dennysville, East Machias, Eastport, Grand Lake Stream Plantation, Harrington, Jonesboro, Jonesport, Lubec, Machias, Machiasport, Marshfield, Meddybemps, Milbridge, Northfield, Passamaquoddy Indian Township, Passamaquoddy Pleasant Point, Pembroke, Perry, Princeton, Robbinston, Roque Bluffs, Steuben, Talmadge, Topsfield, Vanceboro, Waite, Wesley, Whiting and Whitneyville, Eastbrook, Franklin, Great Pond, Osborn and Waltham, Carroll Plantation, Drew Plantation, Lakeville)
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- Senator Weston (Belfast, Belmont, Brooks, Burnham, Frankfort, Freedom, Islesboro, Jackson, Knox, Liberty, Lincolnville, Monroe, Montville, Morrill, Northport, Palermo, Prospect, Searsmont, Searsport, Stockton Springs, Swanville, Thorndike, Troy, Unity, Waldo and Winterport.)

**Allow cost-sharing agreements (either through P&S or LD1932) or consider other special arrangements reflecting specific regional circumstance**

- Rep Eaton (Gouldsboro, Hancock, Lamoine, Sorrento, Sullivan, Waltham and Winter Harbor)
- Rep Edgecomb (Caribou)
- Senator Mills (Anson, Athens, Bingham, Brighton Plantation, Canaan, Caratunk, Lexington Twp., Concord Twp., Cornville, Dennistown Plantation, Embden, Fairfield, Highland Plantation, Jackman, Madison, Moose River, Moscow, New Portland, Norridgewock,)
- Rep Miramant (Rockport, Camden)
- Rep Schatz (Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Penobscot, Sedgwick and Surry)
- Rep Pingree (Brooklin, Deer Isle, Frenchboro, Isle au Haut, Mount Desert (part), North Haven, Stonington, Swan's Island, Tremont and Vinalhaven)

**Reduce minimum number of students required for RSU**

- Rep Eaton (Gouldsboro, Hancock, Lamoine, Sorrento, Sullivan, Waltham and Winter Harbor)
- (Senator Mills)

**Make explicit exceptions for areas with population of less than 100 per square mile**

- Rep. Clark (East Millinocket, Medway and Millinocket)
- Senator Hastings (Baldwin, Bridgton, Harrison, Naples and Sebago, Brownfield, Denmark, Fryeburg, Hiram, Norway, Otisfield, Oxford, Paris and Porter.)
- (Senator Mills)

**Slow down, relax time line**

- Rep. Clark (East Millinocket, Medway and Millinocket)
- Rep Eaton (Gouldsboro, Hancock, Lamoine, Sorrento, Sullivan, Waltham and Winter Harbor)
- Rep Miramant (Rockport, Camden)
- Rep Schatz (Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Penobscot, Sedgwick and Surry)
- Rep Pratt (Bradley, Brewer (part), Clifton, Dedham, Eddington and Holden)

**Remove or lessen penalties**

- Rep Edgecomb (Caribou)
- Rep Miramant (Rockport, Camden)
- Rep Schatz (Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Penobscot, Sedgwick and Surry)

**Limit allowable differential between mill rates of educational contribution for municipalities within new RSUs**

- Rep Babbidge (Kennebunk) Suggests upper mill rate differential of 2:1.

**Reconcile problems of different salary structures**

- Rep Eaton (Gouldsboro, Hancock, Lamoine, Sorrento, Sullivan, Waltham and Winter Harbor)
- Rep Faircloth (Bangor) suggests interim subsidy for teachers transferred to other schools under different structures)

**Improve information from DoE**

- Rep Eaton (Gouldsboro, Hancock, Lamoine, Sorrento, Sullivan, Waltham and Winter Harbor)
- Senator Bryant (Andover, Bethel, Buckfield, Byron, Canton, Dixfield, Gilead, Greenwood, Hanover, Hartford, Hebron, Lincoln Plantation, Lovell, Magalloway Plantation, Mexico, Newry, Peru, Roxbury, Rumford, Stoneham, Stow, Sumner, Sweden, Upton, Waterford, West Paris and Woodstock) – Would like neutral parties to create feasibility studies to RPCs

**Provide incentives to improve educational programs**

- Rep Edgecomb (Caribou) \$100 per student. Offers example from Arkansas.
- Rep Silsby (Augusta)

**Let administrative costs be borne entirely locally. Shift this administration portion of state subsidy toward educational programs**

- Rep Edgecomb (Caribou)

**Eliminate requirement for budget validation referendum in charter municipalities**

- Rep Farrington (Buxton and Gorham)
- Rep Harlow (Portland)
- Rep Silsby (Augusta)
- Rep Treat (Farmingdale, Hallowell and West Gardiner)

**Eliminate requirement for budget validation referendum in “frugal” districts where total spending is not much above EPS**

- Rep Farrington (Buxton and Gorham)

**Adjust EPS labor market calculations to improve equity in rural areas, other problems with EPS**

- Rep McFadden (Alexander, Amherst, Aurora, Beddington, Cooper, Crawford, Deblois, Dennysville, East Machias, Eastbrook, Franklin, Great Pond, Jonesboro, Mariaville, Marshfield, Meddybemps, Northfield, Osborn, Pembroke, Wesley and Whitneyville,)
- Rep Treat (Farmingdale, Hallowell and West Gardiner)

**Protect towns from coerced assumption of debt**

- Rep McFadden (Alexander, Amherst, Aurora, Beddington, Cooper, Crawford, Deblois, Dennysville, East Machias, Eastbrook, Franklin, Great Pond, Jonesboro, Mariaville, Marshfield, Meddybemps, Northfield, Osborn, Pembroke, Wesley, Whitneyville,)
- Senator Mitchell (Augusta, China, Oakland, Sidney and Vassalboro)
- Rep Treat (Farmingdale, Hallowell and West Gardiner)

**Include Unorganized Territories within RSUs**

- Senator Mills (Anson, Athens, Bingham, Brighton Plantation, Canaan, Caratunk, Cornville, Embden, Fairfield, Jackman, Madison, Moose River, Moscow, New Portland, Norridgewock,)

**Allow mechanism for towns to withdraw from RSU**

- Rep Miramant (Rockport, Camden)
- Senator Raye (Addison, Alexander, Baileyville, Baring Plantation, Beals, Beddington, Calais, Centerville, Charlotte, Cherryfield, Codyville Plantation, Columbia, Columbia Falls, Cooper, Crawford, Cutler, Danforth, Deblois, Dennysville, East Machias, Eastport, Grand Lake Stream Plantation, Harrington, Jonesboro, Jonesport, Lubec, Machias, Machiasport, Marshfield, Meddybemps, Milbridge, Northfield, Passamaquoddy Indian Township, Passamaquoddy Pleasant Point, Pembroke, Perry, Princeton, Robbinston, Roque Bluffs, Steuben, Talmadge, Topsfield, Vanceboro, Waite, Wesley, Whiting and Whitneyville, Eastbrook, Franklin, Great Pond, Osborn and Waltham, Carroll Plantation, Drew Plantation, Lakeville)

**Allow different weightings of municipal representation on RSU boards**

- Rep Miramant (Rockport, Camden)

**Provide mechanism to appeal Department of Education rulings**

- Rep Miramant (Rockport, Camden)
- Rep Silsby (Augusta)

**Phase out loss of special education subsidy lost by minimum receivers**

- Rep Miramant (Rockport, Camden)

**Provide solutions to problems of inequity and uncertainty created in districts that contain both public and private high schools where some towns have grandfathered choice and some don't**

- Rep Schatz (Blue Hill, Brooksville, Castine, Penobscot, Sedgwick and Surry)
- Rep Pratt (Bradley, Brewer (part), Clifton, Dedham, Eddington and Holden)
- Rep Pingree (Brooklin, Deer Isle, Frenchboro, Isle au Haut, Mount Desert (part), North Haven, Stonington, Swan's Island, Tremont and Vinalhaven)
- Senator Rosen (Bradley, Brewer, Burlington, Clifton, Greenfield, Eddington, Holden, Lowell, Milford and Orrington, Amherst, Aurora, Bucksport, Castine, Dedham, Mariaville, Orland, Otis, Penobscot, Verona.)

**Allow RSUs to achieve savings by removing requirement to maintain existing personnel contracts**

- Senator Rosen (Bradley, Brewer, Burlington, Clifton, Greenfield, Eddington, Holden, Lowell, Milford and Orrington, Amherst, Aurora, Bucksport, Castine, Dedham, Mariaville, Orland, Otis, Penobscot, Verona.)

**Reconcile problems created for Career Technical Centers as a result of new RSU boundaries**

- Senator Bryant (Andover, Bethel, Buckfield, Byron, Canton, Dixfield, Gilead, Greenwood, Hanover, Hartford, Hebron, Lincoln Plantation, Lovell, Magalloway Plantation, Mexico, Newry, Peru, Roxbury, Rumford, Stoneham, Stow, Sumner, Sweden, Upton, Waterford, West Paris, Woodstock)