

MINUTES
SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

DATE: Wednesday, March 01, 2017
TIME: 3:00 P.M.
PLACE: Room WW55
MEMBERS PRESENT: Chairman Mortimer, Vice Chairman Thayn, Senators Winder, Nonini, Den Hartog, Guthrie, Crabtree, Buckner-Webb, and Ward-Engelking
ABSENT/ EXCUSED: None

NOTE: The sign-in sheet, testimonies and other related materials will be retained with the minutes in the committee's office until the end of the session and will then be located on file with the minutes in the Legislative Services Library.

CONVENED: **Chairman Mortimer** called the Education Committee (Committee) to order at 3:00 p.m.

H 113 **Relating to Teachers; Retire On or After Age 60 to Receive Benefits if Return to Work Force Under Certain Conditions. Representative Lance Clow**, District 24 presented **H 113**. He said this amendment would reduce the retirement age from 62 to 60 which allows individuals to return to work with a school district without having a reduction in retirement benefits. A retired teacher may return to work at any time regardless of the length of the break in service and not have their Public Employee Retirement System of Idaho Benefit (PERSI) reduced. He outline for the Committee the rule of 90 and stated the IRS has also made age retirement changes. He stated the employee will not make a PERSI payment and their benefits will not be raised for additional years of service.

Senator Ward-Engelking said this is a great bill. She asked if a teacher retires and comes back to work, where on the career ladder will they fall. **Tracie Bent**, Chief Planning and Policy Officer, State Board of Education (SBE), replied those employees are not calculated on the career ladder. There is a section of code which addresses this status and the payment for those individuals is different than other instructional staff. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked Ms. Bent if the salary rate for the contracted teachers fall on the career ladder. **Ms. Bent** replied in the negative. She explained how the salaries are calculated and those contracts are negotiated.

Senator Buckner-Webb asked if the returning retired teacher's salary is influenced by their career ladder rung when they retired. **Ms. Bent** replied in the negative. She said their contracts are treated differently than the standard instructional staff.

Senator Den Hartog asked if the school district is still paying the PERSI contribution why is the employee no longer making their payment. **Representative Clow** replied the employee is no longer making PERSI payment because they are drawing out of their PERSI account. The school district would be making a PERSI payment if the district had hired a teacher that was not retired.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked if the retired teacher's PERSI benefit would increase. **Representative Clow** replied in the negative.

TESTIMONY: **Jess Harrison**, Policy and Government Affairs Director, Idaho School Boards Association (ISBA), said they are in support **H 113**. She said this legislation supported by a resolution passed the ISBA membership at the annual convention held in November.

MOTION: **Vice Chairman Thayn** moved to send **H 113** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Buckner-Webb** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Senator Mortimer will carry on the floor.

PRESENTATION: **Treasure Valley Education Partnership (TVEP) – Senior Exit Survey.** **Jessica Ruehrwein**, Executive Director said TVEP is a collaborative organization with over 200 partners, which began five years ago to support children's academic success. She reported the school districts TVEP works with and stated they have served over 200,000 children have been served. TVEP's goal is to insure that every student has some sort of education after high school (see Attachment 1). **Ms. Ruehrwein** reaffirmed the State's 60 percent education goal by 2020 and reported that at least 62 percent of all Idaho jobs will require a degree or certificate. Only 42 percent of Idahoans currently have a degree.

Senator Winder asked if certificates are being counted in the degree totals. **Ms. Ruehrwein** replied at this time TVEP is not able to track all the different types of certificates. **Senator Winder** asked if the SBE has considered finding a way to include in the count those with certificates. **Ms. Bent** said the SBE is researching how many certificates have been earned. She said through the SBE's research they have estimated six percent of the 25 to 35 year old population has a certificate with at least one academic year of education.

Ms. Ruehrwein said the Beyond High School (BHS) group implemented the first every senior student exit survey to the schools they serve. In working with students to prepare students for college the BHS concluded they needed more information from the students to better help them prepare for education beyond high school.

Ms. Ruehrwein said a questionnaire was developed using a modified Harvard template. Over 5,400 high school seniors participated in the survey. They were asked the following questions: 1.) what are your future plans; 2.) what are your educational aspirations; 3.) what influences your education; 4.) what are the barriers to go on; 5.) what classes did you take to prepare them for higher education; and 6.) what school resources available to help you make educational choices. She reported the results of the survey. It disclosed that 74 percent of the seniors planned to attend a two or four year school, yet in the fall only 46 percent of them directly enrolled.

Ms. Ruehrwein reported the key takeaways from the survey: 1.) 80 percent aspired to complete some form of postsecondary education in their lifetime; 2.) 67 percent who plan to go on in the fall indicated they had made their decision in eighth grade or earlier; 3.) finances appeared to be a barrier for many students; and 4.) 77 percent said their families influenced their decision about what they would do after school. These statistics indicated to TVEP that students aspire to continue their education and families are the number one influencer in students deciding to continue their educational pathway.

Ms. Ruehrwein said based on these results TVEP has made the following recommendations: 1.) continue investment in college and career advising and expand support to the elementary and middle schools; 2.) help school districts and university support students during the summer after high school graduation; 3.) increase scholarship funding; and 4.) fund parent outreach and awareness campaigns. **Ms. Ruehrwein** concluded the report saying the TVEP will perform another survey in 2017 and outlined to the Committee the possible questions.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked of the students surveyed, what percentage didn't go on to college because of the financial barrier. **Ms. Ruehrwein** replied for the past survey it was difficult to find that percentage. She said finances seem to be a top issue in the comments on the questionnaire and the next survey will include questions targeted at financial barriers.

Vice Chairman Thayn asked if the survey asked students if they were aware of the Advanced Opportunities program. **Ms. Ruehrwein** replied in the affirmative. She said that number was approximately 70 percent. **Vice Chairman Thayn** wondered if students are aware there are funds to help them take those courses. He asked if in the next survey they would add that question. **Ms. Ruehrwein** replied in the affirmative.

Senator Ward-Engelking said it seems from the survey results that students start making their post secondary decisions by eighth grade. She asked if mentoring and career counseling should be available in the middle schools. **Ms. Ruehrwein** replied the most successful pieces TVEP has witnessed are the one-to-one mentoring. Currently, the ratio of students to counselors is very high and is difficult to serve students effectively.

Senator Guthrie said her report indicated that 70 percent of students were influenced by their families for post secondary education. He asked in the recommendations why parental outreach is not prioritized. **Ms. Ruehrwein** replied the recommendations are not prioritized. She stated that the parent outreach and awareness piece is the most complicated. Locally and nationally organizations are trying to determine the best ways to communicate and engage families. TVEP is considering a parent survey in order to evaluate ways to reach families.

Senator Den Hartog asked if students think negatively of working while going to college. **Ms. Ruehrwein** replied the negative of working is if it interferes with studying. That topic needs further exploration.

Senator Den Hartog said it is difficult for students to find postsecondary scholarships. She asked if rather than having students apply for statewide scholarships if it would it be more beneficial to keep postsecondary education costs lower through policy. **Ms. Ruehrwein** replied the Idaho Opportunity Scholarship in the past two years has seen 100 percent increase in applications in those schools where counselors are helping students complete the forms. She stated by keeping application process simple the additional funding has allowed students to stay in Idaho to go to school.

S 1121 **Relating to the Safe Routes to School Healthy Kids Program. Chairman Mortimer** explained that **S 1121** was assigned to this Committee in error. **Vice Chairman Thayn** asked for unanimous consent to send **S 1121** to the floor for a re-referral. There were no objections.

S 1123 **Relating to Schools; Provide Transportation Costs for Certain Approved School Activities. Amend and Make Technical Corrections. Senator Guthrie**, District 28, presented **S 1123** and explained this bill addresses the transportation support program for public schools. He said during the economic downturn the State was looking to save budget dollars. Funding reimbursements for student transportation were cut back and limited to travel to and from school. He directed the Committee to review the language that was added during the economic downturn, which he has proposed to be eliminated. He said the bill provides that the SBE would promulgate rules allowing reimbursement for school activities such as field trips and other educational related experiences. He said there is a strong argument that field trips are an important part of a healthy and diversified curriculum.

Senator Guthrie said the fiscal impact is expected to be between \$2.25 million and \$2.5 million. Currently there is room in the public schools transportation reimbursement budget to pay the costs. He said this legislation will help move school districts back in the direction of placing students on yellow school buses and ensure that the desired safety standards are being met. He stated this legislation is consistent with the economic downturn statement, "education was the last to be cut and the first to be restored." He asked that **S 1123** be sent to the floor with a do pass recommendation.

MOTION: **Senator Den Hartog** moved to send **S 1123** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Winder** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**. Senator Guthrie will carry on the floor.

H 70 **Relating to STEM School Designation; Provide Legislative Intent and Establish Criteria, Annual Reporting, and Rulemaking. Senator Nonini**, District 3, said this bill addresses STEM school designations. He said the bill provides an opportunity for public schools to earn a STEM school designation or a STEM program designation, defines the terms, and requires the SBE and the STEM Action Center to collaborate to develop the requirements. He said by setting a common minimum standard for earning STEM designation parents and students will understand the quality and expectation of the school or programs in which they are enrolling. He said there is no new fiscal impact to the General Fund.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked if the criteria for a STEM designation have been developed. **Angela Hemingway**, Executive Director, Idaho STEM Action Center, replied in the negative. She said a committee will be formed to develop the criteria for schools to achieve the STEM designation. She said the funding formula has yet to be determined. **Senator Ward-Engelking** asked if there are no funds, could a school still have the STEM designation. **Ms. Hemingway** replied in the affirmative. She explained there are 11 states that have this designation without the attachment of funds.

Senator Ward-Engelking asked if Ms. Hemingway could explain community and family involvement as it is written in the legislation. **Ms. Hemingway** replied grants are being offered to community groups and organizations to host family STEM events. If this legislation passes, criteria will be developed for the designations outlined.

Senator Den Hartog asked if the intent of the STEM designation is that the grants from the STEM Action Center would only go to STEM designated schools. **Ms. Hemingway** replied in the negative. She said this is a new grant program the Center would like to develop.

TESTIMONY: **Jason Ronk**, State Government Affairs Director, Micron Technology (Micron), said he is here on behalf of the Idaho Technology Council. He said both entities are in support of **H 70** STEM education. He explained STEM education is extremely important to Micron and other technology employers in the State. Micron has helped to create the STEM Action Center. Each organization appreciates the schools that develop comprehensive STEM learning environments which encourage students to utilize project-based learning. This legislation allows parents and students who are looking for STEM education to know what to expect from STEM designated schools. Schools that are not yet STEM designated will have a roadmap as to how they can achieve this designation.

Vicky Reynolds, Accreditation Specialist, Northwest Accrediting Commission Idaho Accreditation Council, Division of Advanced Education, said they are in support of this legislation. In accrediting schools the question has been how do people know if school is a good STEM school. She said this legislation will provide confidence for parents and students.

Senator Nonini said STEM education has been a passion of his and it is gaining ground. He praised the work of Ms. Hemingway and the strides of the STEM Action Center. He asked the committee to support **H 70** and the continued work for STEM education.

Senator Ward-Engelking said she is very supportive of the STEM school designation. She cautioned that we not lose sight of the other subjects, especially the arts; all subjects are important.

MOTION:

Senator Crabtree moved to send **H 70** to the floor with a **do pass** recommendation. **Senator Guthrie** seconded the motion. The motion carried by **voice vote**.

S 1097

Relating to Master Teacher Premiums (MTP); Amend, Remove Language, Authorize a New Section, Rulemaking, and an Effective Date. Vice Chairman Thayne presented **S 1097**. He said in the 2020 budget year, the State will begin paying master teacher premiums. He explained when the Legislature passed the bill the fiscal impact was estimated that 15 to 20 percent of the teachers in the State would receive the MTP. The reports coming from the school districts indicate the numbers of teachers qualifying and applying for the MTP may actually be as high as 100 percent. That would increase the fiscal impact from approximately \$12 million to \$48 million. He is concerned the State will not be able to fulfill that obligation.

Vice Chairman Thayne explained **S 1097** moves and expands a section of code to give another option than the MTP program. School districts can choose to participate in either the MTP program where teachers earn premiums based upon portfolios and evaluations or choose to participate in the Master School Premium (MSP) program where teachers receive master premiums based upon students achieving academic goals set within the school district and approved by the State Board of Education. He gave a variety of examples as to how the MSP might be achieved.

Senator Ward-Engelking stated she understands his concern with the numbers of teachers qualifying for the master teacher premium and the cost to the State. She explained the career ladder development process by the Governor's Task Force on Education and the compromises made to come up with the current MTP program. She is concerned that the standards are now being changed midstream.

Senator Crabtree said it seems more logical to work within the budget framework for allocating the funding. **Vice Chairman Thayne** replied there may not be the funds available to fulfill the MTP obligation. He said this is why he is proposing this policy change. It is an effort to avert a possible breakdown in 2020.

Representative Kerby as coauthor of the legislation, addressed the concerns that many teachers qualify for the MTP and the funds will not be available. This is to help teachers from doing all the work to build their portfolio, only to realize there is no funding in 2020 for the MTP. As a former school superintendent, he gave an example of a program that worked well in his school district. He said the school district set goals, teachers worked together, and students' testing scores improved. Those teachers received a bonus for their accomplishments.

Senator Ward-Engelking said she is extremely concerned that the Committee is having this conversation about not being able to fulfill the MTP obligation. She stated this was a promise that was made to teachers when they compromised on items in the career ladder. She stated if all teachers can become a MTP, they should be celebrated and we should make sure the money is there for them. It means all of the students in Idaho are meeting the benchmarks. **Representative Kerby** replied the funding concern needs to be addressed. He explained how the money set aside in the Public Education Stabilization Fund (PESF) could be used to fund the MTP. He stated the career ladder is very comprehensive and not many people understood it. After three years into the career ladder some are realizing this program may be unfundable as promised. He believes this discussion is important so there are no surprises in 2020.

TESTIMONY: **Penni Cyr**, President, Idaho Education Association stated the teachers strongly oppose the legislation. She said it weakens the career ladder and is a broken promise. Currently the teachers are working in accordance with the legislation of 2015. The teachers were hesitant about the program but they are now embracing the portfolios. She said if this is not affordable, she recommends the legislation should revert to the Governor's Task Force on Education original recommendations.

Chairman Mortimer asked what is the IEA's biggest concern of the proposed legislation. **Ms. Cyr** replied there is a restriction in funding which was not in the original legislation. **Chairman Mortimer** asked if there are some other options. **Ms. Cyr** said it should be up to each teacher if they would like to attain the MTP. She gave examples of how classroom teachers work together to build portfolios. She stated there are too many sideboards on **S 1097**.

Senator Guthrie asked when teachers are putting together their portfolio are their results from teaching to the standards or to the test. **Ms. Cyr** replied neither and explained the arduous process of putting portfolios together.

Vice Chairman Thayn said he appreciated all the comments on **S 1097**. He stated he is concerned that in 2020 financial obligations will be more than this State can fulfill. He said there was never an attempt to limit what teachers could earn his concern is what the State can pay. He said he is willing to work with the IEA and spend time to amend or hold as determined by the Committee.

MOTION: **Senator Guthrie** moved to **hold S 1097** in Committee subject to the call of the Chair. **Senator Buckner-Webb** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

MINUTES APPROVAL: **Senator Nonini** moved to approve the Minutes of February 2, 2017. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

Senator Guthrie moved to approve the Minutes of February 6, 2017. **Senator Nonini** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

Vice Chairman Thayn moved to approve the Minutes of February 7, 2017. **Senator Ward-Engelking** seconded the motion. The motion passed by **voice vote**.

ADJOURNED: There being no more business, **Chairman Mortimer** adjourned the meeting at 4:52 p.m.

Senator Dean M. Mortimer
Chair

LeAnn Mohr
Secretary