

PUBLIC HEARING:

SB 252, SB 509

TAPES 049-050, A/B

SENATE REVENUE COMMITTEE

February 21, 2001 — 8:30 A.M. - HEARING ROOM A - STATE CAPITOL BUILDING

Members Present: Senator Ted Ferrioli, Chair

Senator Lee Beyer, Vice Chair

Senator Susan Castillo

Senator Tony Corcoran

Senator John Minnis

Senator Charles Starr

Members Excused: Senator Gary George

Staff: Paul Warner, Legislative Revenue Officer

Steve Meyer, Economist, Legislative Revenue Office

Carol Phillips, Committee Assistant

Witnesses: Dr. Peter Tarzian, Superintendent, Falls City School District

Fred Heard, Vice Principal, Falls City School

Sen. Roger Beyer, SD15

Ray Halfer, Maple Grove School

Greg Kroeplin, Maple Grove School

Pamela Thomas, Maple Grove School teacher

Tony Ramos, Douglas County School District, Days

Creek School

Julie Cleveland, parent from Sauvie Island School

Maryann Hanson, teacher from Sauvie Island School

Sherry Olson, parent from Sauvie Island School

Michael McManus, Wolf Creek School principal

Ozzie Rose, Confederation of Oregon School Administrators

Rep. Greg Smith, HD 59

Paul Schanno, resident of District 29, Dufur

Jim Kiefert, Superintendent of Chenoweth School District

Jack Henderson, Superintendent of Dufur School District

Christine Stetzer, Principal

David Gianotti, Superintendent, Camas Valley School District

Tim Banks, Camas Valley School District, Board Chair

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005 Chair Ferrioli Meeting called to order 8:41 a.m.

OPENED PUBLIC HEARING ON SB 509

018 Dr. Peter Tarzian Introduced himself and colleague.

025 Fred Heard Stated he would limit his comments to his perspective as a Vice Principal (not that of a former State Representative, State Senator, or President of the Senate) and as a future Principal. Started his teaching career 40 years ago. Left teaching for several years and returned to it two years ago. Discovered Falls City School District and decided he wanted to

be involved with it.

Feels discipline, character, and respect are issues that can be best imparted in a small school setting and has been successful in their school district. Feels it has become clear that if they begin at the Kindergarten level and maintain it through Grade 12, they would have something very special. Feels SB 509 is a good foundation.

- 113 Tarzian Discussed Exhibit 4, which offers details for justifying support of this bill. Gave example of what prevents Falls City from falling under current definition of Small School. This is not just an issue effecting rural and remote schools on the east side of the Cascades, but actually "right in your back yard". Falls City School District is adjacent to the Dallas School District. The proximity of an elementary school in the Dallas School District prevents their particular elementary school from qualifying for the Small Elementary School Correction under current statute. If Falls City had to close, other schools in the basic vicinity do not have the available capacity to take the students, thus long bus rides would be imposed.
- 160 Chair Ferrioli Declared that the eight-mile limitation is a remnant of a period in time when the legislature tried everything possible to encourage school consolidations. For the record, stated most people are very happy the state has emerged from that period. Stated it may be time to address some of the remnants of that period and start to remedy situations caused by them.
- 179 Sen. Roger Beyer Introduced individuals who will testify regarding this bill. Stated that actual distance between rural schools should not be a limitation to receiving funding, especially when that school is in a different district and the students have no opportunity to attend anyway because the school is full. Has been involved with this same type of issue since the 1993 legislative

session as a school board member, when there was a ten-mile limitation, which was subsequently changed to the present eight-mile limitation.

- 240 Greg Kroepflin Read a brief introduction about Maple Grove School. Maple Grove is ten miles south of Molalla, and the school first opened its doors to students in 1888. Even though there are only 64 students currently enrolled, the school is still the community's focal point and should not be eliminated. Explained why Maple Grove School is unique and needs additional funding.

Comments, and questions and answers interspersed.

- 370 Tony Ramos Gave information regarding Douglas County School District and the Days Creek School. Even though the area is large geographically, there are only about 220 students throughout the district. They have had to eliminate the music program and a full-time librarian. Advisors not trained in counseling provide guidance. Seventy percent of the students are at poverty level, and they come to school unprepared to learn. This district does not want to take anything away from other districts... they just want adequate funding to provide for their own students' needs.

Questions and answers interspersed.

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- 035 Julie Cleveland Stated that Sauvie Island is the largest inland west of the Mississippi River. Because they did not have their own high school, they consolidated with Scappoose School District in 1999. Sees this bill as providing a way for Sauvie Island schools to be equal with others in their district, despite their remoteness.

- 064 Maryann Hanson Gave examples of how they have reduced services as much as they can. They have combined first and second grades, third and

fourth grades, and fifth and sixth grades because they have only three full-time classroom teachers. Their principal is on site only two days a week, and a music teacher only one day a week. Commented on the value of small schools and gave several examples. More than half the students in her fifth/sixth grade class come from off the island brought by parents looking for a better learning environment for their children.

099 Sherry Olson Very involved in the Sauvie Island School. Volunteers at the school to fill in where needed.

128 Michael McManus Testified that the school is truly the hub of their community and is concerned what would happen to that community if the school had to close. Wolf Creek Elementary is an extremely poor school. The free and reduced-rate lunch program serves between 85% and 98% of the total student population. In spite of socio-economic situation, their reading, writing, and mathematics scores are 30 percentage points higher than would be expected. Had to close two elementary schools last year. Instead of the 120-child school, everyone is concentrated in a 700-student "mega-center" which is the next school closest to them over two mountain passes. Even that school is full to capacity now. Students would have to travel even further, but that school does not have capacity for them either. Concerned by the thought of small children out on dark country roads before daylight waiting for a bus. The travel hours put them in a situation where they do not have the same education or learning environment that other children do.

Extensive questions and answers followed.

280 Ozzie Rose Stated SB 509 is one of fifteen bills that help some schools at the expense of others. Certain ramification ensued when voters said schools would be funded in ways other than principally by property taxes. Said that the large schools

will soon come before the legislature asking for more money for their own large schools.

Recommends that all school-funding bills be analyzed side-by-side to make the best decision for all schools.

Questions and answers interspersed.

- 427 Sen. Castillo Asked Mr. Rose to address poverty issue in both large and small schools.
- 443 Rose Responded that the formula has a poverty and neglected student component and distributes money to rural areas and to Portland. Josephine County is specifically mentioned in the formula. Stated the relief is probably not enough to do everything that most people believe should be done. The formula divides up a huge pot of money in a relatively fair way. Considers it a 'zero sum game'.

More questions and answers followed.

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- 035 Chair Ferrioli For the record, disagreed with Rose and said "This is not a "zero sum game". The funding total has not yet been established for schools in this legislative session. To suggest that someone is always going to lose just because we make some adjustments to the formula is incorrect. The fact is the state has turned away from forced consolidation of schools. Referred to Exhibit 6. The job as legislators is always to help some at the expense of some others. The question is should an anachronistic formula be carried forward or be revised to help small schools instead of penalize them.
- 068 Sen. Corcoran Disagreed with the Chair, but agreed that the bills should be analyzed side-by-side to arrive at the best solution.

104 Rep. Greg Smith Asked members to set aside rural versus urban issue. The matter concerns a social issue...how do we provide equal opportunity for every child no matter if they are in the inner city or the most remote parts of the state. Passage of SB 509 is the right thing to do.

Questions and answers interspersed.

135 Sen. L. Beyer Appreciated the fact that Rep. Smith indicated the matter was not a rural versus urban issue. Asked if the mileage issue was removed from the bill would he support it.

137 Rep. Smith Stated he would be willing to consult with the committee, school board members, and parents to come up with a definition that works for all schools in rural Oregon. Restated he wants to see equal opportunity for every child in Oregon.

Questions and answers followed.

177 Paul Schanno Testified regarding District 29 Dufur School. Attended school there in a one-room school building. Now has grandchildren in school there. Their school building out in the middle of nowhere is still the center of their community. The imminent school closure has caused great stress among the local population. Stated that 25% of their student population is Native American. Reading scores are higher than expected even with seasonal population. The imminent closure of the school is tearing two communities apart.

259 Jim Kiefert Stated that Chenowith School is the center of their community. When the school (which had been the center of their community) in Rowena closed, that community fell apart. The school became a church, the grocery store closed, and the gas station left. There is no sense of community in Rowena any longer. If Moser School is taken away, another community will die. Feels there is an obligation to look at the

social structure of the state, not just school buildings and funding. Schools cannot be treated the same as factories. In dealing with the education of children, bigger (schools) is not better. Advocates adding the words "within the district" to the bill.

- 373 Jack Henderson Testified in support of the bill. Concerned with quality of education for all students regardless of school size and location.
- 403 Christine Stetzer Read written testimony in support of saving the small schools. Said it is important to have a variety in school size and location. Students should be able to visit museums and city parks and have swimming pools just around the corner. There should also be schools where students count the deer on the hillside every morning and watch the neighboring rancher feed hay to his cattle. Senators and Representatives come from small remote schools as well as urban schools. Future leaders need the differing perspectives that come from different educational backgrounds.

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- 013 David Gianotti Stated that Camas Valley is a small isolated community much like those others spoke about today. The school is the center of their community, and without that school they probably would not have a community. The community library, gym, and local fire department are all located on the school campus. Because of previous funding issues, they operate on a four-day week. The nearest school is over a mountain pass. Because of budget cuts, volunteers fill in and do all that is required from assisting in classrooms to transporting students.
- 112 Tim Banks Thanked the Chair for the opportunity to testify to the Committee.

139 Chair Ferrioli Adjourned meeting at 10:12 a.m.

Submitted by, Reviewed by,

Carol Phillips Kim Taylor James

Committee Assistant Revenue Office Manager

Exhibit Summary:

1. SB 509, Meyer, Revenue Impact Statement, 1 pp.
2. SB 509, Meyer, Remote Small School Additional Weight, 1 pp.
3. SB 509, Meyer, Remote Small School Charts, 1 pp.
4. SB 509, Tarzian, Written testimony undated, 2 pp.
5. SB 509, Meyer, List of all school bills in Senate and House committees, 1 pp.