

These minutes contain materials which paraphrase and/or summarize statements made during this session. Only text enclosed in quotation marks

report a speaker's exact words. For complete contents of the proceedings, please refer to the tapes.

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION

May 13, 1991 Hearing Room F 1:30 p.m. Tapes 81-83

MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Carolyn Oakley, Chair Rep. Vera Katz, Vice-Chair Rep. Bruce Hugo Rep. Delna Jones Rep. Mike Nelson Rep. Bob Pickard Rep. Walt Schroeder

STAFF PRESENT: Lee Penny, Committee Administrator Carolynn Gillson, Committee Assistant

MEASURES CONSIDERED: SB 917 - Consolidation of school districts by specified dates, PAW

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TAPE 81, SIDE A

005REP. CAROLYN OAKLEY, chair: Calls the meeting to order at 2:10 p.m.

SB 917A - Requires consolidation of union high school and elementary school districts by specified dates Public Hearing Witnesses: Dale Weight, Governor's Task Force on Education Reform Norma Paulus, Superintendent of Public Instruction Ozzie Rose, Confederation of School Administrators (COSA) Rep. Carl Hosticka, District 40 John Marshall, Oregon School Boards Association (OSB A) Sen. Shirley Gold, District 7 Howard Fetz, PeterSB urg School District Judy Miller, Farmington View School District Dwayne Sternhagen, Ash Valley School District Rep. Larry Sowa, District 26 Gina Houston, Jennings Lodge Organization Cliff Tetreault, West Union School District Trudy Brennan, West Union School District Leo Jilk, Wamic School District Rep. Liz VanLeeuwen, District 37 Thelma Elliott, former state board member Alan Powell, Wyatt Elementary School District Polly Wilson, Harris School District Roger Bristol, Harris Elementary School Pam Williams, Concerned about Responsible Education Teresa Giacomini, Pinehurst School District Scott Alvord, Ashland High School Thomas Giacomini, Pinehurst School District Aaron Bridges, Pinehurst Elementary School Frank NusSB aum, Bellfountain Elementary School Board Jane Brown, from Silverton Fred Krauss, Wasco Education Service District

038 DALE WEIGHT, member of the Governor's Task Force on Education Reform and vice- chair of the State Board of Education: Speaks in support of the bill on behalf of the Board. > Unification would benefit the total quality of education within the state. > Explains how unification efforts in Washington state have produced better quality education. > Addresses unification concerns of smaller school districts and communities. > The opportunity for unification is now at its best time.

072 NORMA PAULUS, Superintendent of Public Instruction: Fully supports the bill. > Does not believe bigger is always better. > This bill does not mean we will lose all the small school districts and local involvement. Refers to ORS 335.515 and 336.065 which provide for input, advise and consent by the local community. > We will have more school site-based management. > Structuring section in the Department of Education to train volunteers and train teachers to work with volunteers. > Doesn't believe small schools will be destroyed and local support will be lost. Pledges her thrust as superintendent will be exactly the opposite.

132 REP. WALT SCHROEDER: Talks about a situation in his legislative district where after unification took place, the smaller outlying schools were closed because of a budget crunch and bus transportation has halted.

PAULUS: It is unacceptable to have children in this state not attending school because they can't get there. This bill would not change that situation. It is a funding measure. > Unification would have prevented one school district and maybe more from going bankrupt. > Real answer is this state must find a stable, dedicated and fair funding mechanism that includes transportation.

170 OZZIE ROSE, COSA: Speaks in support of the bill and summarizes his testimony (EXHIBIT A). The passing of Ballot Measure 5 and the pressure to address equity are the most compelling arguments for the Legislature to move forward on unification at this time. > Reviews information in attachments to his testimony concerning unified elementary districts and the impact of unification on tax rates and spending. > Reads testimony addressing the concerns from opponents to SB 917.

280 REP. BRUCE HUGO: How would the long-term funding formula the Legislature is working with be affected by the passage or nonpassage of this bill?

ROSE: The long-term formula is driven by distributing revenue on a per pupil basis. If unification does not pass, the Legislature will have to decide whether equity means allowing some districts to continue spending more than the state average per student at the expense of other school districts. If unification passes, there will be a smaller number of school districts with a narrower range in rates and per pupil expenditures.

308 REP. CARL HOSTICKA, District 40: The bill in its current form allows for no flexibility or determinations in individual cases whether unification will actually achieve the goals the proponents have spoken about. > The bill is based upon the assumption if bigger is not better, at least it is more efficient and cheaper or fairer. > We don't need one bill that mandates unification for all school districts without finding the gains claimed by the proponents will be realized. > Explains why bigger does not mean better. > Explains how some costs of educating students depend upon other factors. > Need to consolidate school districts based upon specific findings arrived at by the Department through an open process.

375 JOHN MARSHALL, OSB A: Appears in opposition to SB 917A because it would deny local voters the right to vote on the organization of their local schools. > Issue is full of emotion. Many school boards are going to be faced with some difficult decisions. > Addresses mandatory

unification or consolidation myths including saving money, enhancing coordination of curriculum and improve taxpayer equity. > Thinks unification will result in increased costs not reduced costs. > Need to talk about what the public expects out of our public schools, and based on the expected outcomes, measure student performance. > One provision of school reform calls for site-based decision making. One hundred and ten of our school districts already have site committees in place - they are the elected school boards.

TAPE 82, SIDE A

043 MARSHALL: SB 917A jeopardizes small schools.

063 REP. DELNA JONES: Do you see consolidation different than unification?

MARSHALL: By definition, yes. > Explains how SB 917A deals with both issues. The policy is not different.

083 REP. VERA KATZ: There is great difference between local school boards and the 2020 site-based committees.

116 SENATOR SHIRLEY GOLD: The Senate Education Committee had SB 917 drafted because this issue seemed particularly pertinent in light of Ballot Measure 5. > It is not a partisan bill. > Consolidation is a subject that will happen over a period of time. The state is going to be funding education. Measure 5 takes away local control. Is it right for the Legislature to continue recognizing the disparity between rich and poor school districts and not do anything about it? > This issue has become a state issue. Whether the Legislature takes action or not, consolidation will occur. > Talks about the big and small school district argument concerning consolidation.

233 REP. SCHROEDER: Is it better to make people consolidate or unify or is it better to allow them to make their own decision based on a number of factors?

SENATOR GOLD: We have been given the responsibility of determining a new era for schools through school finance.

260 HOWARD FETZ, superintendent, PeterSB urg School District: We are a unified K-12 district in Wasco County near The Dalles. Testifies in opposition of the bill and provides testimony outlining their concerns (EXHIBIT A) including the following: > Where is the money saved? There is no study that shows the alleged savings. > Safety, mental and emotional well-being of the students involved. > Whether educational efficiency and quality of life are considered.

350 JUDY MILLER, school board member, Farmington View School District: A single elementary school district in Washington County educating 320 K-6 students. The seventh graders go into the HillSB oro Union High School District. > In 1986, OSB A conducted a study of unifying six elementary feeder districts and the high school district. OSB A determined by unifying there would be no more cost savings to the taxpayers. It was also determined we had already obtained curriculum coordination. > Communities feel there is easier access to the administration and government of small school districts. Accountability to the public would decrease with unification. > There has been no proof we will gain educationally or economically by this bill. > Restructuring from unification would create unrest and conflict within the district.

404 DWAYNE STERNHAGEN, Ash Valley School District #125: Reviews his written testimony opposing the bill because their school would be closed if they are forced to unify with the Reedsport School District (EXHIBIT C). Statements opposing the bill from other people in his school district are attached to his testimony. > Thirteen students in K-8 and located approximately 30 miles from Reedsport.

TAPE 81, SIDE B

030 REP. LARRY SOWA: Talks about the situation in the Redland School District where secondary school students are tuitioned out to high schools in another district. > Describes the island situations throughout the state where students are bussed to schools further away when there are schools nearby that are part of another district. > Refers to the SB 917-A5 amendment that would address the noncontiguous and contiguous school district situation (EXHIBIT D).

077 GINA HOUSTON, president, Jennings Lodge Organization for Quality Localized Education: Reads her testimony providing background information on the Jennings Lodge situation and explaining why SB 917A needs to be amended to cover islands (EXHIBIT E). Provides letters in support of SB 917A (EXHIBIT F).

162 REP. CARL HOSTICKA: At the end of the last session, a bill dealing with your problem was defeated. Local negotiations were to take place in an attempt to solve the problem. Did those negotiations take place?

HOUSTON: Negotiation was a lame attempt to pacify legislators in the 1989 session. It is a money issue on the opposition side and a kid issue on our side. So far money has won. The current school board in Oregon City and the administration have total control of the situation and we have no representation on that board.

188 CLIFF TETREULT, superintendent, West Union School District: We are one of the six feeder districts to Hillsboro Union High School. Explains how they have used their small size as a strength. Feels SB 918 would be a wiser way to go. Visibility is lost when looking at unification.

225 TRUDY BRENNAN, board member, West Union School District: Reviews her testimony concerning their school district (EXHIBIT G). > Focuses on effectiveness of local involvement in their school district and explains how unification would reduce their voluntary involvement. > People in our district want the ability to vote and do not want to feel unification is a done deal. > Provides testimony in opposition to the bill from Sandra Hillman (EXHIBIT H).

275 LEO JILK, school board chair, Wamic School District: Talks about his school district in southern Wasco county that serves 50 to 55 kids. > Need to involve the community more directly in the school system. > Opposed to SB 917. > The closest school, elementary or high school, is 17 miles away. It would be a 30 mile school bus route.

400 REP. LIZ VanLEEuwEN: Speaks in opposition to the bill. Represents many schools that are not unified. There is no guarantee unification will save money or provide a better education. The opposite may be true. > Key is the quality of the teacher in the classroom. Reads a letter from a teacher who has taught in both a unified and nonunified district. More parent involvement in the nonunified district. > No guarantee

anything will be better with unification except there will be bigger school districts.

TAPE 82, SIDE B

040 THELMA ELLIOTT, former school board member and state board member: Reads her testimony in support of SB 917A and urging the committee to shorten the timeline for compliance and simplify the procedures for merging school districts (EXHIBIT I).

REP. JONES: If we did not have the bill, would the process of funding schools with a long-term formula put the districts in a position where they would be compelled to unify because of the funding structure and the equity issue?

ELLIOTT: There 142 nonunified school districts right now that enroll only 13 percent of the students in this state. They must compete with 155 school districts that enroll 87 percent of the students in this state. It is a matter of reality. The issue is whether or not the Legislature is going to protect the instructional dollars for students or defend the operational dollars of districts.

REP. JONES: At some point, we are going to have to say the structure is not the issue. Funding the education of the child is the issue.

ELLIOTT: In order to have a general uniform system of education as the Oregon Constitution requires, we need a uniform mechanism with which to funnel funds through.

130 ALAN POWELL, concerned parent from Wyatt Elementary School District 63CJ: Summarizes his testimony describing their rural elementary school and opposing SB 917A (EXHIBIT J). > Explains their school has 70 students in K-8 and is five miles from the nearest elementary school or high school.

182 POLLY WILSON, principal of Harris School District: Provides testimony opposing the bill (EXHIBIT K). Main concern is quality of education. Many proposed school reforms are already happening in our district.

233 ROGER BRISTOL, parent, Harris Elementary School: Reads his testimony concerning their school district and opposing forced unification (EXHIBIT L).

293 PAM WILLIAMS, member of Concerned About Responsible Education: Reads her testimony in support of SB 917A and refers to map showing how many school districts there are in each county (EXHIBIT M). > Notes there are five years before the bill is effective and concerns can be addressed during the transition. > The fiscal responsibility would save tax dollars which is why Measure 5 passed. > Suggests adding an amendment to the bill exempting rural or remote areas of the state.

346 REP. SCHROEDER: In my legislative district, there are eight high schools. Four are unified districts and have been in the safety net until last year. One district that is not unified has had no problem getting a budget passed.

360 TERESA GIACOMINI, Pinehurst School District #94: We have 40 children in our district and six are tuitioned to the high school in Ashland. We are 25 miles from the high school and it is a 2,000 foot

drop geographically. Provides her testimony describing her school (EXHIBIT N). > Big and small is the issue.

386 SCOTT ALVORD, student at Ashland High School: Reads his testimony explaining why he is against SB 917A (EXHIBIT O).

416 THOMAS GIACOMINI, student in the Pinehurst School District: Reads his testimony explaining why he opposes SB 917A (EXHIBIT P).

447 AARON BRIDGES, student at Pinehurst School: Reads his testimony explaining why he opposes SB 917A (EXHIBIT Q).

TAPE 83, SIDE A

033 FRANK NUSSBAUM, chairman, Bellfountain Elementary School Board: Reads his testimony describing his school and explaining how the Monroe Union High School District survived a consolidation attempt two years ago (EXHIBIT R).

073 JANE BROWN, concerned parent from Silverton: Opposes SB 917A. Agrees about the high quality in smaller schools. Urges the committee members to vote against the bill and prove that ease of administration is not more important to the state than quality of education. Provides written testimony (EXHIBIT S).

090 FRED KRAUSS, superintendent, Wasco Education Service District: I have eight school districts of various sizes. Some would be happy with unification and many would not. Talks about the advantages of small elementary school districts.

Work Session on SB 917

120 REP. SCHROEDER: I do support voluntary consolidation or unification. Refers to legislation he supported in past sessions concerning unification or consolidation.

MOTION: Rep. Schroeder moves to table SB 917A.

VOTE: In a roll call vote, the motion carried, with Rep. Katz voting NAY and Reps. Hugo and Jones excused.

Testimony in opposition to SB 917A was submitted for the record from 17 people (EXHIBIT T).

140 CHAIR OAKLEY: Adjourns meeting at 4:15 p.m.

Submitted by: Reviewed by:

Carolynn GillsonLee Penny Assistant Administrator

EXHIBIT LOG: A - Testimony on SB 917A - COSA - 9 pages
B - Testimony on SB 917A - Howard Fetz - 8 pages
C - Testimony on SB 917A - Dwayne Sternhagen - 11 pages D-SB 917A-5 proposed amendment - Rep. Sowa - 1 pages E-Testimony on SB 917A - Gina Houston - 18 pages F-Testimony on SB 917A - several people - 85 pages G-Testimony on SB 917A - Trudy Brennan - 2 pages H-Testimony on SB 917A - Sandra Hillman - 2 pages I-Testimony on SB 917A - Thelma Elliott - 4 pages J-Testimony on SB 917A - Alan Powell - 4 pages K-Testimony on

SB 917A - Polly Wilson - 2 pages L-Testimony on SB 917A - Roger Bristol
- 1 page M-Testimony on SB 917A - Pam Williams - 2 pages N-Testimony on
SB 917A - Teresa Giacomini - 2 pages O-Testimony on SB 917A - Scott
Alvord - 1 page P-Testimony on SB 917A - Thomas Giacomini - 1 page
Q-Testimony on SB 917A - Aaron Bridges - 1 page R-Testimony on SB 917A -
Frank NusSB aum - 1 page S-Testimony on SB 917A - Jane Brown - 1 page
T-Testimony on SB 917A - several people - 47 pages