

The Public School Forum's Friday Report

PDF versions can be found at www.ncforum.org/archives.htm

Volume 4, Issue 25

February 7, 2003

Session Starts on a Bi-Partisan Note: House Elects Co-Speakers; Senate Names Republicans As Co-Chairs

On Wednesday, the House took an unprecedented step and elected Representatives Jim Black (D) and Richard Morgan (R) as co-speakers. After going for almost a week unable to elect a speaker because of the 60-60 split, the House chose to divide the speakership between Black and Morgan, who will preside on alternate days. The major unresolved issues are the composition and leadership of committees, except for the Rules committee which will be chaired by Democrat Bill Culpepper. Education advocates were heartened by both speakers support in their initial remarks:

“Surely all of us agree that our schools should be among the best in the nation. And that all children deserve the best education that we can provide, so they will grow into productive citizens.” [Jim Black](#)

“And we must be willing to find the right balance that restores fiscal stability without hurting education and economic development. For only through education can we grow the sort of workforce that will make economic development possible and sustainable.” [Richard Morgan](#)

Earlier in the week, the Senate made key committee selections, including naming several Republicans to committee chairs, despite the Democrats having a six vote margin. Linda Garrou (D-Forsyth), Walter Dalton (D-Rutherford), and Kay Hagan (D-Guilford) were named the Appropriations committee co-chairs, and Charlie Albertson (D-Sampson) and Wib Gulley (D-Durham) were chosen vice-chairs. The Education Appropriations committee will be chaired by Jeannie Lucas (D-Durham) and Steve Metcalf (D-Buncombe), with Vernon Malone (D-Wake) serving as Vice Chair and John Garwood (R-Wilkes) serving as the Ranking Minority member. The Education committee will be chaired by Jeannie Lucas, Steve Metcalf and John Garwood with A.B. Swindell (D-Nash) serving as Vice Chair and Austin Allran (R-Burke) serving as Ranking Minority member.

State News . . .

ECS Rates Progress on NCLB; NC National Leader

The Education Commission of the States (ECS) has developed an interactive website to track state progress on implementing the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation. State progress is evaluated in the categories of Standards and Assessment, Accountability and Adequate Yearly Progress, School Improvement, Safe Schools, Supplemental

ECS Rates (cont'd)

Services, Report Card, and Teacher Quality. ECS rates state implementation using “appears on track”, “appears to be partially on track”, “does not appear on track”, or “unclear or data not available” as the progress indicators. *USA Today* reports that 12 states are near complying with half or more of the categories, including North Carolina which leads the nation in being on track in 26 of 40 categories. Below are the categories, which North Carolina appears on track with:

- Standards and Assessment (10 of 11 indicators)
- Accountability and Adequate Yearly Progress (6 of 9 indicators)
- School Improvement (5 of 7 indicators)
- Safe Schools (0 of three indicators—data not available)
- Supplemental Services (4 of 4 indicators)
- Report Card (0 of 1 indicator—partially on track)
- Teacher Quality (1 of 5 indicators—only Wisconsin is on track to identify highly-qualified teachers in every classroom).

Mississippi, Tennessee, and Texas followed North Carolina and are appear on track to comply with 24 of 40 indicators. New Hampshire, Nebraska, and Oregon are on track with only three indicators. An analysis of the five states that had their accountability plans approved first and were recognized at the NCLB one-year anniversary press conference shows mixed results. Colorado appears on track in 23 indicators; Massachusetts in 21 indicators; Indiana in 18 indicators; Ohio in 17 indicators; and New York in 13 indicators. Out of the 20 indicators in standards and assessment and accountability, Colorado appears on track in 60% of the indicators, with Indiana and Massachusetts on track in 55%, Ohio in 50% of the variables, and New York in 35% of the indicators.

Many states are expressing concern about the gap between federal requirements and federal resources. “As they face shrinking state budgets, many local lawmakers and education officials are complaining that the federal government is saddling schools with dozens of new requirements without providing enough extra money to get the job done,” *USA Today* reports. A study by the New Hampshire School Administrators Association estimates that NCLB implementation will cost \$575 per student to implement, although the federal government is only providing \$77 per student. As a result, a New Hampshire state senator is going to propose legislation forbidding the state to spending money on NCLB implementation because the state’s constitution forbids the state to passing unfunded mandates on to local governments.

For more information, go to <http://nclb.ecs.org/nclb/>

Causby Running for Superintendent of Public Instruction

Johnston County Schools Superintendent Jim Causby has announced that he will run for the Democratic nomination for state superintendent of public instruction. Causby has the unique honor of having been twice named the state Superintendent of the Year by the NC Association of School Administrators for his work in Polk and Johnston Counties. Causby has been the Johnston County superintendent for nine years and is planning to retire in June 2004. Causby said, "I don't think there's any question that DPI has been cut to the point that it's no longer as responsive as it should be." He explained that DPI has become a monitoring agency instead of focusing on instruction. He said, "I concentrate on a lot of things in this job, but everything is focused on instruction."

While Causby has been superintendent of Johnston County school district, the district has grown by about 1,000 new students each year, with 23,500 students enrolled this year. Johnston County voters have approved \$155 million from bond issues in 1999 and 2001, and every school in the district will be renovated by 2006. For three years in a row, end of grade tests have increased in the district. In 2001-02, two-thirds of the district's 32 schools earned one of the state's top two distinctions. The *News & Observer* quotes Fred Bartholomew, chairman of the Johnston County school board, saying, "He's (Causby) had experience as a superintendent in small systems and large systems. He's had experience with bond referendums. He knows that we're facing some difficult times, and we have faced some tough times in Johnston County, but we have made progress."

Other candidates for state superintendent include Republicans Bill Fletcher, former chairman of the Wake County school board, and Michael Barrick, a high school English teacher in Caldwell County. Barrick ran against Ward in 2000.

Lee To Advise Governor on Education & Budget Issues

Governor Easley has named former state Senator and Appropriations committee co-chair Howard Lee an education and budget adviser. For the past couple of weeks, Senator Lee has been helping the Governor draft his education budget, and he will now serve as chief executive of the Education Cabinet. A large part of Lee's time will be spent lobbying his former colleagues on behalf of the Governor's education agenda, especially his More At Four and class-size reduction initiatives, which are expected to come under intense scrutiny this year because of the budget shortfall.

Many are speculating that Lee is considering running for State Superintendent of Public Instruction now that Mike Ward has announced he will not seek reelection.

Guilford County School District Proposes a Charter School

Guilford County school district, which has opposed charter schools for years, is considering converting its Early College at Guilford College program into a charter school, which would mean that Early College would be the state's first charter school run by a traditional public school system. Early College opened this fall as an alternative school for gifted students.

If the Guilford County Board of Education applies for and receives one of the limited number of charters available, money for the Early College school would go directly to the school without first going into the district's budget. Otho Tucker, director of the North Carolina Office of Charter Schools, said that becoming a charter school wouldn't change how the school operates. The district will be responsible for establishing a board to oversee the school. Tucker said, "It will still be controlled by the school system, obviously."

This decision is more political than educational. There has been skepticism about Early College, which some see as an example of Superintendent Terry Grier's penchant for establishing too many programs. If Early College were a charter with its own funding, the school board would not have to provide money that could be used at other schools. Guilford County, like most school districts, opposes the charter school movement. Two years ago, the county and a charter school had a disagreement about the purchase of an abandoned school. Tucker hopes that Guilford County Schools' proposal might help to dissipate hostility between charters and traditional public schools. He said, "It breaks new ground. I'm pleased to see there is a school system looking at this." Roger Gerber, president of the League of Charter Schools, said that he welcomes the plan because it gives parents more education choices.

National News . . .

States Fiscal Condition Worsens

The fiscal health of states has worsened in the first two months of the new year and half are considering raising taxes, according to a new survey by the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL). The survey found that budget deficit estimates have grown 50% in the first two months, with 36 states projecting deficits for this fiscal year totaling \$25.7 billion. NCSL President Oklahoma State Senator Angela Monson observes that most legislators are in uncharted territory dealing with the breadth and depth of the problem: "The magnitude of next year's budget gap is startling. Thirty-three states estimate budget gaps in excess of 5%, with 18 facing gaps above 10%. There is great cause for concern since the deficit numbers continue to grow at an alarming rate." If this year looks bleak, fiscal year 2004 has even darker budget projections. Next year states are projecting shortfalls totaling \$68.5 billion, including states not expecting a FY 2003 shortfall.

Fiscal Condition (cont'd)

Monson acknowledges the weakened economy as being part of the problem but asserts that the unfounded mandates from federal government in the areas of education, national security, and Medicaid total over \$25 billion. The NCSL notes that “37 states say spending is exceeding budgeted levels, with all but five reporting excessive Medicaid or health care costs.” To address the budget shortfalls, states are considering various tax increases and spending cuts. The NCSL survey found that so far this year nine states have reduced K-12 education spending, 13 states have reduced higher education spending, 13 states have reduced Medicaid spending, and 9 states have reduced spending on their penal system.

For more information, go www.ncsl.org

Critics Claim Mandates and Budget Proposal Don't Match

As they released their education budget this week, the Bush Administration touted the fact the all 50 states met the January 31 deadline to submit their No Child Left Behind (NCLB) accountability plans. Administration officials note that spending on K-12 education has risen dramatically since 1995, including an additional \$3.5 billion for Title I students. This year's budget proposes increasing education services for the nation's poorest children increased \$1 billion to \$12.3 billion and special education funding was also increased \$1 billion.

Critics counter that the administration pledged to spend \$6 billion on NCLB implementation. The *New York Times* quotes Education Trust analyst and NCLB proponent Ross Wiener comparing the NCLB funding with the administration's proposed \$674 billion 10-year tax package: “If money includes priorities, the President believes No Child Left Behind is one sixty-seventh as important as cutting taxes. When the federal government starts demanding that states close the achievement gap and turn around struggling schools, there's a commensurate obligation to see that the funds are there.” Education Undersecretary Eugene Hickok emphasizes the administration's increased funding and notes that “the color of change is not always green.”

Forum News . . .

Seeking Jay Robinson Award Nominations

The Jay Robinson Leadership Award was established by the Public School Forum Board of Directors in recognition of outstanding leaders in the field of public education. The award may be given to anyone who has displayed innovative and effective leadership for the public schools of North Carolina. Past winners include Laura Bilbro-Berry, the first Teaching Fellow to be named North Carolina Teacher of the Year, and Tom McNeel, Superintendent of Caldwell County schools. The nominations must be postmarked by March 7, 2002. Nominations postmarked after that date will not be accepted. The award ceremony will be held on June 2, 2002, at the Raleigh Crabtree Marriott Hotel. Admission will be by invitation only. The honor includes a \$5,000 award sponsored by the Wachovia Corporation.

For an application, contact Shana Fryar (sfryar@ncforum.org) at 919-781-6833 or go to www.ncforum.org and download a copy.

The *Friday Report* is published weekly by the Public School Forum of NC and is distributed to Forum Board members, the press, legislators active in educational policy, and Forum subscribers. Archived editions can be found at www.ncforum.org/archives.htm