

MINUTES
SENATE FINANCE COMMITTEE
January 31, 2001
9:04 AM

TAPES

SFC-01 # 5, SIDE A

CALL TO ORDER

Co-Chair Pete Kelly convened the meeting at approximately 9:04 AM.

PRESENT

Senator Dave Donley, Co-Chair
Senator Pete Kelly, Co-Chair
Senator Loren Leman
Senator Lyda Green
Senator Gary Wilken
Senator Alan Austerman
Senator Olson
Senator Hoffman
Senator Ward

SUMMARY INFORMATION

SJR 6-EDUCATION BLOCK GRANTS

The Committee amended the resolution and reported it from Committee.

#Sjr6

SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION NO. 6

Urging the Congress of the United States to provide federal education funds as a block grant to the state.

Co-Chair Donley stated that this resolution is virtually identical to one passed by the twenty-first legislature. He explained that it calls on the U.S. Congress to initiate a system of block grants of federal education funding for the various states. He noted that this proposal is similar to the "very successful" program with welfare reform. He emphasized that the federal block grants would save administrative costs on the federal, state and local levels. Those savings, he stressed, could be "put into the classrooms for

the benefit of our children's education rather than being burned up in paperwork and bureaucracy, which is very expensive." He detailed the multitude of federal programs governing education, each with extensive reporting requirements. All of this, he stated, takes staff to administer. He added that this is a frustration experienced by both the state Department of Education and Early Development and the local school districts.

Co-Chair Donley shared that this resolution assists in the legislature's effort for a smaller, smarter state government and better efficiency in delivering educational products. He opined that this resolution follows the "philosophy that the state and local school districts can do a better job of determining the education for our children and utilizing that money, than people in Washington D.C."

Co-Chair Donley pointed out that the U.S. House of Representatives passed a block grant proposal two years prior, but that it did not pass the U.S. Senate. He added that this issue was also an element of President George W. Bush's campaign platform. Co-Chair Donley predicted that the president would therefore defer more judgment to the states on the utilization of education dollars.

Co-Chair Donley stressed the importance of passing this resolution again in the current year, due to the newly organized Congress, new president and new Alaska State Legislature, as well.

Amendment #1: This conceptual amendment changes "President-elect" to "President" and "Secretary of Education-designee" to "Secretary of Education" to reflect the swearing-in of George W. Bush as U.S. President and confirmation of Rod Paige as U.S. Secretary of Education. These are technical changes.

Co-Chair Donley moved for adoption, pointing out that since the resolution was drafted, these officials have been sworn in and confirmed.

There was no objection and the amendment was ADOPTED.

Senator Green asked if this resolution should be sent to additional parties other than those included in the language of the resolution.

Co-Chair Donley suggested the National Council of State Legislatures and others. He stated the he would send a copy of the resolution to these organizations informally.

Co-Chair Donley offered a motion to report from Committee SJR 6,

22-LS0360\C, as amended with a Senate Finance Committee, zero fiscal note.

Without objection, the bill MOVED from Committee.

Co-Chair Donley spoke to a memo he sent to budget subcommittee chairs regarding the scheduling of subcommittee meetings. He emphasized the importance of addressing the missions and measures of the departments and developing targets for state programs.

Senator Green commented that she was encouraged with the prospect that this resolution could, in fact, affect change. She noted education and health and social services as areas where the legislature could have "a voice".

Co-Chair Kelly agreed.

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ADJOURNMENT

Co-Chair Kelly adjourned the meeting at 9:13 AM.