

3/13 Memo to file re: House Education Committee testimony on HF350 today

Duane Mattheis for ASMD

Not like "accountability" re post-secondary remedial provision -- suggests need for "malpractice insurance," will encourage schools to flunk kids; maybe we should "blame" the higher-ed institutions that trained the teachers in first place...

Longer year "long overdue," except got to pay for, and don't forget about air-conditioning schools. Complains about starting date after Labor Day requirement in present law.

State takeover of failing school district -- opposes; state bureaucracy doesn't do such a hot job now.

Site management -- If this isn't micro-management by the state of local matters, what is? Don't mandate this -- carrots okay.

Charter schools. ASMD "not supportive in past, not enthusiastic" about the provisions in HF350, altho these least objectionable have seen so far. Involves a lot of "entanglements" and confusing "accountability." These are "quasi-private" schools in a public building. In concept, might have merit; needs more study, however.

Cites cost of peer review, teacher mentoring, etc.

Objects to referendum cap, at least until build E & T allowance into basic formula. For his 26 K-12 districts, 18.5 percent of operating funds come from the excess levy, so vitally important. Plus, freedom to tax selves to improve schools is a "fundamental" right of local folks.

As to fiscal part -- property-tax class rates need to be addressed in any real restructuring of property tax.

McEachern says he's figured out that can go to 188 days (from today's 170) and still start after Labor Day by staying in session one week after Memorial Day, plus taking only a week at Christmas and 2 days at Easter. Points out that not all the days bill adds are necessarily teacher contact. But the real discussion occurs over excess levy.

Bauerly speaks very strongly against Matthias position, says excess levies have run rampant, "MUST" be a limit. Cites his district -- Big Lake (poor) vs. Becker (rich). Speaks at length, loudly, emphatically. Lasley, Weaver support this view. They also cite the lawsuit. (During this discussion, Ozment says we are "seeing low property-tax districts dip into (reduce) their offerings in order to pay teachers salaries, which are "coming off of programs and hurting children."

Linda Sandvig, Mpls. PS lobbyist: Mpls committed to OBE; support things like peer review, site-based management, but want latter flexible; all 64 Mpls. buildings at different places on site-management.

Bill doesn't go far enough on charter schools -- should require that each school mirror the district in which it is located in socio-economic, racial makeup.

Mildly opposes school year provisions on grounds "if we're not doing a good job now, why do more of same?" Says wants to work on "causes of lack of learning," etc., with the committee, then talk about longer school year.