

4 April 91

(Rep Kelso)

Talked with Tom Nelson and some others this morning. Here's his/their counsel, re: the things coming up next.

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It's probably going to be easier to pass the bill than it may look. The groups opposed have lots more, lots bigger things to worry about this session. And there's more of a disposition among legislators to try some different things.

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From this latter standpoint, it's possible and good to make a virtue out of the things the opposition criticizes. Especially, the ways in which charter schools would be different from the public schools we're familiar with. Absolutely these are different. We need to try some things that are different. Etc.

This relates to your question about all the 'objections' and 'terrible things that could happen . . .'

Re: that sort of objection, too, think back to open enrollment 1985 and after . . . and the predictions about all the terrible things that would happen. "Chaos", etc.

Tom says that when he went around to districts in his year as commissioner they used to tell him how many of their kids were enrolled in post-secondary options. It's now something they're proud of. He loved it.

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Also, on the question of 'risks', a good offense may be the best defense.

There are risks (especially, to kids) in not trying things that could improve education. In a changing world there's a major risk in standing pat. If the existing schools aren't working -- for some kids, or as well as we'd like for most kids -- there is a risk in not changing . . . recognizing the risks there are in changing.

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Tom is very strong on the need for multiple sponsors. For the 'somebody else'.

The teacher groups as you know are pushing to get the post-secondaries out. And the MSBA is pushing to keep any one of the "first four" sponsors (school districts, intermediate districts, education districts, etc.) from sponsoring a school outside its own borders.

The next push, inevitably (maybe Friday afternoon) will be to get the State Board out, so that in the end there will be no sponsor except the local board.

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This connects with the argument that "There's no need for a bill like this because we can do all these things now."

Tom thinks back to what he saw in Rosemount/Apple Valley. The pressure on the board is tremendous not to offer something at one elementary school that it doesn't at all. And that's the easy way out for the board: Uniformity is Equity!

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On the "help all schools" Tom simply says: This does that. You have to have models, to pull the traditional schools along into something different.

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On deseg, a couple of things.

What's coming from people of color now, more than anything, is a cry for good schools. Schools that work, for their kids. Which may mean schools they run. This bill responds to that.

Second, the schools are subject to the existing state law against discriminating, in the schools.

Third, the bill could not be used to produce white neighborhood schools.

Fourth, a sponsor could not require a charter school to serve only a racial, etc. group; or only a neighborhood that includes primarily a racial group.

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Re: the 4/10 hearing:

\* Barb Schmidt is available. She could bring a student along, to speak to the "kids need it".

\* Jim Walker says he is not available. He has a speaking date with a group at home, that he's already put off a couple of times. He would send Lyle Koski, the principal of the school

that wants to 'go charter' in North Branch. And that teacher you heard in front of the Senate.

\* Would you think about Arly Gunderman? He's a principal, in Mounds View; immediate past president of the National Ass'n of Elementary School Principals. He was a member of Tom Nelson's working group.

\* See the letter attached, from another teacher who'd like to do it.

Query: Will McEachern have opponents testify? Or not?

Will he lay it over, at full committee? Or refer to the division?