



DAILY BRIEF

From April 5, 2010

All of the action today was in the House Education Policy Council where two of AIF's educational reform priorities were on the agenda. A full run-down of what took place during this marathon committee meeting is included in tonight's *Daily Brief*.

Also don't miss this week's episode of AIFTV. Today we bring you a special two-part episode featuring a roundtable with AIF lobby team members. There is no better way to catch-up with what is happening in Tallahassee than to hear straight from our top-notch lobby team.

Education

Today, the House Education Policy Council held a marathon meeting from 12:30 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. in consideration of two priorities bills for AIF.

The first bill to be considered was HB 7053 Relating to Public School Assessments by Representative John Legg (R-Port Richey). As the companion measure to SB 4 by Senator John Thrasher (R-Jacksonville), the bill specifies Geometry and Algebra II as two of the four mathematics credits needed for graduation, as well as Biology I and Chemistry, or Physics as two of the three science credits needed for graduation. Additionally, the bill eliminates the 9th and 10th grade FCAT for math and science and replaces them with end-of-course exams in Algebra I, Geometry, and Biology I.

Research shows that these courses are needed so that Florida's high school graduates are prepared for both higher education and jobs in the 21st century economy. HB 7053 passed unanimously with little debate or public testimony.

HB 7053 has passed its final committee of reference and is now ready for the House Calendar.

AIF SUPPORTS a continued emphasis on increasing the rigor of high school course offerings and graduation requirement. HB 7053 makes important improvements in Florida's graduation requirements so that students are prepared for the needs of employers and able to compete in a global workforce.

HB 7189 Relating to Education Personnel by Representative John Legg (R-Port Richey) was given far greater consideration as the Council listened to public testimony and debate for nearly eight hours. Known as the "teacher pay bill", HB 7189 would make major reforms in the way teachers are evaluated and compensated. Representative Legg spent about half an hour presenting the bill, summarizing the bill as follows:

Performance Appraisals: School districts must adopt performance appraisals for instructional personnel and school administrators that differentiate among four levels of performance: unsatisfactory, needs improvement, effective, and highly effective. Effective July 1, 2014, more than 50 percent of each employee's performance appraisal must be based upon student learning gains.

Compensation: The bill requires school districts to adopt a salary schedule that compensates employees solely based upon performance appraisals; prohibits the use of years of service or degrees held in setting the salary schedule.

Contracts: The bill ends the use of professional service contracts for classroom teachers hired on or after July 1, 2010. For classroom teachers hired on or after July 1, 2010, the bill requires one probationary contract and authorizes up to four annual contracts. Such teachers must be designated effective or highly effective on two out of the three preceding year's performance appraisals to receive an annual contract beyond the fifth year.

Teacher Quality Accountability: The bill establishes a performance fund that school districts and charter schools must use to implement end-of-course assessments and teacher contract and compensation reforms and creates a narrow exemption. Noncompliance with these requirements results in the withholding of performance funds, which is an amount equal to five percent of the total state, local, and federal funds allocated to the district by the Florida Education Finance Program.

Educator Certification and Preparation: The bill requires out-of-state certified teachers to demonstrate subject area mastery; requires temporary certificate-holders to demonstrate subject area mastery within one year of employment; removes lifetime certificate renewal for National Board certified teachers; and conditions certificate renewal upon effective or highly effective performance on four out of five performance appraisals during the previous certification period. The bill conditions continued approval of initial teacher preparation programs upon demonstration that program graduates produce student learning gains.

During the introduction of bill amendments, council members began working through eight amendments that were offered by Democrat members, and all of which were defeated along largely party line vote.

During the public testimony portion of the bill's consideration, over 130 individuals requested to speak about why they supported/opposed the measure. Chairman Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel) announced that the committee would end public testimony at 6:00 to allow members time to debate the bill. Later, after about an hour and a half of public testimony, Chair Weatherford announced that the Council would postpone and further limit member debate in order to try to get more public testimony.

Speaking in favor of the bill were **AIF, Education Commissioner Eric Smith, the Foundation for Florida's Future**, and other business groups. Testifying in opposition were the state and several local teachers' unions, and over 100 teachers.

After reminding the audience to maintain decorum in the meeting and that applause was not appropriate, audience members waved their hands in the air and did the "golf clap" when they wanted to show support for a statement being made.

As time ran out for public testimony, Chair Weatherford read the remaining names of persons in opposition to the bill into the record, and the council moved to member debate.

Representative Martin Kiar (D-Parkland) opened debate by enumerating the articles of the constitution that he thought the bill violated and stated that the only people supporting the bill had a political agenda, while all in opposition were teachers.

Debate on the bill was mostly along party lines, with one notable exception. Representative Faye Culp (R-Tampa) debated against the bill, stating that she would vote yes to get the bill out of committee, but would vote no if changes weren't made to allow education and experience, as defined as time in the classroom, as part of the pay for performance requirement in the bill.

After debate by members, the Council voted to pass the bill at almost 8 p.m. by a vote of 12-5.

AIF SUPPORTS policies that are necessary to improve Florida's chances for success in the Race to the Top competition – a federal education grant funding competition, which could bring almost \$1 billion in new funding to Florida. HB 7189 creates a more businesslike approach to teacher pay and a system that allows the BEST teachers to have a career in the Classroom.