

MINUTES

ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

Friday, June 22, 2001
10:00 a.m.
Room 171, State Capitol
Little Rock, Arkansas

Senator David Malone, the Acting Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

ARKANSAS BLUE RIBBON COMMISSION ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE: Mr. Frank Anthony; Ms. Charlie Cole Chaffin; Ms. Judith Donovan; Mr. Gene Gregory; Dr. Reed Greenwood; Ms. Pat Harris, Mr. Wayne Hartsfield, Ms. Shelby Hillman, Mr. Randy Hughes; Dr. Don Love; Mr. David Matthews; Mr. Hugh McDonald; Ms. Kathy McFetridge; Mr. Robert McGinnis; Dr. Martha McNair; Ms. Stacy Pittman; Ms. Alisia Ramirez-Hartz; Mr. Ulicious Reed; Mr. Larry Ross; Mr. Keith Stokes; and Ms. Johnette Walker. Dr. Benny Gooden attended via telephone conference call and Dr. Charles Dunn was represented by Mr. John Choate.

Ex-Officio members present: Senator David Malone, Acting Co-Chair; Senator Jim Hill; Representative M. Olin Cook, Acting Co-Chair; Representative George French; and Representative Larry Teague.

Other members of the General Assembly present: Senator Jim Argue; Senator Jodie Mahony; Senator John Riggs; Senator Bill Walker; Representative Shane Broadway, Speaker of the House; Representative LeRoy Dangeau; Representative Dean Elliott; Representative Jeremy Hutchinson; Representative Sam Ledbetter; Representative Jim Magnus; Representative Marvin Parks; Representative Tommy Roebuck; Representative Harmon Seawel; Representative Paul Weaver; Representative Robert White; and Representative Shawn Womack.

Senator Malone recognized each Commission member and asked that they provide a small biographical sketch.

Adoption of the Rules of the Commission

Ms. Pittman was recognized and made a motion to adopt the proposed rules of the Commission. Mr. McGinnis seconded the motion for adoption. Without objection, the rules of the Commission were adopted.

Remarks by the Sponsor of Act 1398 of 2001

Senator John Riggs was recognized. Senator Riggs, the sponsor of the legislation that became Act 1398 of 2001, described the background of the Act and discussed the Blue Ribbon Commission's statutory obligations. Senator Riggs also discussed with the Commission the obligations that the State must meet regarding its public education system as the result of the recent Pulaski County Chancery Court decision on the Lake View lawsuit. These included higher and equitable teacher salaries, correction of curriculum disparities between school districts, provision of properly equipped educational facilities, ensuring the efficient and effective utilization of resources by school districts, providing early childhood education opportunities, and address the lack of adequacy in the system of financing public schools.

Senator Riggs went on to offer the following suggestions to the Commission:

- ❖ Involve the citizen of Arkansas in a state-wide conversation about the issues confronting the state's public education system
- ❖ Invite the plaintiffs in the school finance litigation to share their thoughts and suggestions with the Commission
- ❖ Raise resources from the private sector to augment the public funding received by the Commission to carry out its obligations
- ❖ Utilize all available resources in its deliberations
- ❖ Develop a blueprint for use by policymakers in revamping the state's public education system

Remarks by the Sponsor of Act 1386 of 2001

Representative M. Olin Cook was recognized. Representative Cook, the sponsor of the legislation that became Act 1398 of 2001, discussed the background for the Advisory Subcommittee and how the bill grew from looking at the status of Arkansas's education system and how to make it better for every child in the state. Representative Cook stated that it was his expectation that the Blue Ribbon Commission and the Advisory Committee would work together to address the policy issues regarding public education that the state faces.

Discussion of the History of School Finance Litigation in Arkansas

Mr. Tristan D. Greene, Special Assistant to the Director, Arkansas Department of Education, was recognized. Mr. Greene provided the

Commission with an historical overview of school finance litigation in Arkansas. He went on to discuss various aspects of the most recent court decision.

Selection of Commission Chairperson

Ms. Chaffin nominated Mr. Robert McGinnis to serve as a co-chair of the Commission. Mr. Ross nominated Ms. Stacy Pittman to serve as a co-chair. Mr. Matthews moved that the nominations cease and that Mr. McGinnis and Ms. Pittman be elected by acclamation to serve as Co-Chairs for the Blue Ribbon Commission. Without objection, the motion prevailed.

Discussion of Commission's Future Activities

The next meeting date for the Commission was set for July 19, 2001.

There being no further business, the Commission adjourned at 12:05 p.m.