

ADE DAILY NEWS CLIPS

March 8, 2013

Sheriff's Office: Sewing Machines Stolen from School, Sold on eBay (Fox 16)

LITTLE ROCK, AR - A woman who works for the Pulaski County Special School District was arrested Thursday, accused of stealing sewing machines and attachments valued at nearly \$24,000 and selling them on eBay.

Rena Walker, 53, was taken into custody at PCSDD headquarters on Dixon Road. She is in the Pulaski County jail on 4 counts of theft of property. Walker's bond is set at \$33,000.

According to the arrest report, the alleged sale of the stolen goods took place on Valentine's Day. Investigators were able to track the stolen goods using their serial numbers. According to the sheriff's office, Walker admitted to the crime.

A spokesperson for the school district says Walker worked in the IT department. She has been suspended without pay and has been recommended for termination.

Arkansas Legislature: Lawmakers OK Timber Tax Hike, Income Tax Exemption (Southwest Times Record, Fort Smith)

LITTLE ROCK — State lawmakers approved bills to raise the state tax on timber land and exempt military pay from the state income tax on Thursday.

Without discussion, the House passed a bill which would exempt the home addresses and other personal contact information of non-elected public school employees from the state Freedom of Information Act.

House Bill 1248 by Rep. Debra Hobbs, R-Rogers, passed 89-0 and goes to the Senate.

By a 24-8 vote, the Senate approved Senate Bill 5 by Sen. Bill Sample, R-Hot Springs, which would increase the state tax on timber lands from 15 cents to 20 cents per acre, beginning with assessments for the 2013 tax year.

"If you don't produce timber you don't pay the tax," Sample said on the Senate floor when questioned whether the tax out affect farmers.

Sample said the 5-cent increase would raise about \$700,000 a year in special revenues for maintenance, operation and improvement of the commission's statewide program for detection, prevention and suppression of forest fires. It has Gov. Mike Beebe's support.

The Senate voted 34-0 to pass SB 463 by Sen. Jim Hendren, R-Gravette. It would exempt the service pay of about 6,300 active duty military personnel from the state income tax at a cost of about \$7 million annually, funds the state fiscal office says the state cannot afford within Beebe's balanced budget proposal.

Sample's bill goes to the House, while Hendren's bill was held in the Senate.

Senate Pro Tem Michael Lamoureux, R-Russellville, said Hendren's bill was held because the Senate and the House are still trying to work out an agreement on how the amount of tax cuts the state budget for the upcoming fiscal year, which begins July 1, can absorb. House Speaker Davy Carter, R-Cabot, has suggested up to \$150 million.

The Senate on Thursday also approved SB 332 by Sen. Johnny Key, R-Mountain Home, which would raise the contribution rate school districts must pay for the public school employees' health insurance program.

Currently, he said, the minimum amount per employee is \$131 a month. Under SB 322, the districts would be required to pay at least \$150 a month per employee.

Key said 94 school districts currently contribute at or above \$150 a month, while 15 contribute between \$140-\$150 a month. The rest contribute the minimum, which has remained \$130 since 2004.

Key also told the Senate that schools contribute much less to employee health plans than state government does for state employees.

He said the increase would generate about \$5.1 million annually.

The Senate also approved:

- SB 140 by Sen. Missy Irvin, R-Mountain view, which would require school districts to participate in drills to prepare them to react to campus violence, just as they do to prepare for tornadoes and fires. The bill passed 35-0 and goes to the House.
- HB 1326 by Rep. Marshall Wright, D-Forrest City, which would allow a member of the state Parole Board, a Parole Board investigator or a parole revocation judge to carry a concealed handgun into a place where law enforcement officers are allowed to carry guns if the person has a concealed-carry permit and is on official business. The bill passed 34-0 and goes to the governor.
- HB 1410 by Rep. Andy Mayberry, R-Hensley, which would allow public schools in Arkansas to offer American Sign Language as a credit-bearing language or foreign language. The bill passed 34-0 and goes to the governor.

The House voted 92-0 to approve a Senate amendment to House Concurrent Resolution 1003 by House Speaker Davy Carter, R-Cabot, which sets April 19 as the date for the end of regular business in the session and May 17 as the date for formal adjournment, or sine die.

The Senate amendment adds "any issue concerning state funded or federally funded programs" to the list of issues that lawmakers can convene to consider between April 19 and May 17. The Senate has passed a matching resolution.

In a voice vote, the House passed House Resolution 1022 by Rep. Jonathan Barnett, R-Siloam Springs, encouraging the federal government to fund, complete and maintain a 12-foot-deep channel for navigation along the Arkansas River.

Licensure Board looking into charges against principal (Lovely County Citizen)

The State Department of Education Licensure Board is investigating after a Eureka Springs parent and a high school teacher filed ethics violation charges against the principal of Eureka Spring High School.

Parent Leigh Turner says she filed a complaint with the Arkansas Professional Licensure Standards Board Ethics Subcommittee in mid-February against Principal Kathryn Lavender. The complaint was filed over a series of incidents, including one involving a substitute teacher who became physically aggressive toward students during class.

The high school choir and band director, Chad Martin, also filed a complaint for ethics violations. The Citizen has learned that a third person has also filed ethics complaints against Lavendar with the state, though that person has not come forward publicly.

The Department of Education's Licensure Board is investigating all three, it said in a letter to Leigh Turner dated Feb. 14.

"The Arkansas Professional Licensure Standards Board Ethics Subcommittee voted unanimously in its February meeting to open an investigation into the allegations that you and two others reported concerning violations of Standards 1 and 2 of the Code of Ethics for Arkansas educators by Kathryn Lavendar," the letter states.

It does not give a projected completion date for the investigation, which could lead to a reprimand that, at a maximum, could include a licensure suspension or even permanent revocation, if the Licensure Board and ADE officials deem it appropriate given the alleged violations.

Leigh Turner says her child attempted to defend a student who was pushed by the substitute following a verbal altercation in class, and then her child was grabbed and jerked around by the same substitute in the hall in front of another member of the staff.

Leigh Turner's child was taken to the office and the police were called, according to Turner's complaint filed with the board's Ethics Subcommittee: "When I left the office, I walked into a rather one-sided conversation between the sub and the office assistant. The sub was ranting about the incident in full view and hearing of anyone. He stated that the office assistant could tear up the disciplinary reports on the other students (one of whom he has also punished), but that my son needed to be taught a lesson. He did not know that I was standing behind him."

She said the superintendent and high school counselor were immediately brought into the situation. "When he was fully aware of the situation, [Superintendent Curtis] Turner informed me the sub would be sent home immediately and never be allowed to sub in that school again," Leigh Turner said in her complaint to the Licensure Board. "Because I do not like to cause trouble and am aware that life does not always go as planned. ... I believed him when he said he would handle the situation appropriately."

Turner said she attempted to contact Lavender to make sure she "was aware of the situation" and was told she was.

On Feb. 1, Turner said in her complaint, the same substitute teacher from the previous altercation was back teaching at the school. She said she was informed Lavender had OK'd the substitute returning.

"Here is my difficulty," Turner wrote in the complaint paperwork. "Ms. Lavender is a stickler for the rules. And she is very thorough. When I spoke to her to let her know that I was filing this violation, she kept saying that she wasn't there that day. Regardless of whether or not [the substitute] was still on the sub list, she had full working knowledge that he had been physical with two students and that [Superintendent] Turner did not want him back at the school. Working with that knowledge, she still called him in to sub. I feel that this sub is a danger to the students, and she knew this. This is a clear violation of Standard One for her failure to protect her students, and Standard Two for her unethical behavior in allowing this person to sub again in spite of his history."

The Code of Ethics for Arkansas Educators includes the following standards for ethical conduct:

* 6.01 Standard 1: An educator maintains a professional relationship with each student, both in and outside the classroom.

* 6.02 Standard 2: An educator maintains competence regarding skills, knowledge and dispositions relating to his/her organizational position, subject matter and/or pedagogical practice.

Music teacher steps forward

Eureka Springs band/choir director and teacher Chad Martin agrees with Turner that there have been multiple difficulties with Lavender's approach to staff and students. "The whole school has an overarching concern with the situation with her," Martin said.

According to Martin, his problems with Lavender have included her yelling at teachers in front of other students, yelling at students and subjecting Martin himself to a series of write-ups which "really twist facts dramatically."

He recently decided to also file ethics charges against Lavendar, specifically accusing her of harassing him and slandering him.

Martin told the Citizen that problems included Lavender repeatedly calling teachers down for talking to one another when they were engaged in outdoor supervision duty or other tasks in full view of other.

"Another teacher and I were discussing class preparation in the parking lot of the old high school, and she yelled at us from 25 feet away in front of probably 30 other students and told us to separate," he said.

He said he'd recently received a performance evaluation that included a list of "impossible" demands, as well as "demeaning and pointless" tasks.

"I have been asked to write a book report on the Constitution," he said. "I have been asked to shadow another music teacher for teaching tips." Martin has been music teacher at ES for seven years.

Martin added he teaches about 110 music students on 14 levels, each of which requires a separate weekly lesson plan, has been denied full access to the new high school music facilities and has had to work with less-than adequate resources, including a music filing system and lockers for students' band instruments he had requested and was told was not in the budget. "Even the most basic things have been denied," he said.

"I stepped forward to file because of deep concerns I have with Principal Lavender," Leigh Turner said. "Also because parents are incredibly hesitant to complain because they have students there. They have a fear of retaliation."

"This stuff has been going on for three years," Martin said. "It's still going on daily down there. My teachers' union rep has been helping me get through this the last couple of months."

Superintendent Curtis Turner declined to comment on the situation in a phone call with the Citizen. "I can't even address it," he said. "Obviously when personnel is involved like this, I just really can't say anything."

Principal Kathryn Lavender also declined comment, citing confidentiality.

Licensure Board explains situation

According to Chief Investigator Michael L. Smith of the Arkansas Department of Education's Professional Licensure Standards Board Ethics Subcommittee, complaints and reports to the subcommittee are entirely confidential until such time as the the board decides to act -- and even may remain confidential afterward, if no serious offenses are found to have occurred.

"I can neither confirm nor deny details of this particular case, or if there even is a case," Smith said, citing confidentiality rules. "If the subcommittee makes a recommendation to the state board and they act on it, then their minutes or other documents pertaining to the case are a matter of public record."

Smith said the time required to investigate and present a case to the state board can vary for a number of reasons but generally his department tries to get its work done in 90 days or less.

"However, the educator may ask for more time to respond," he said, "and if it does go to the state board, it could be with them for a month or three months. The educator in question can challenge the findings and have an evidentiary meeting with the subcommittee. A lot of different things can happen."

According to Smith, should this or any case go from the Ethics Subcommittee to the ADE, it can then take the following actions:

- * Determine that there's no reasonable belief that the incident happened, in which case the case is closed and considered confidential;
- * The educator may receive a technical/minimal violation which will involve a "letter of caution." -- otherwise there is no action taken and the matter is considered confidential;
- * The educator may receive a "written warning";
- * The educator may receive a "written reprimand" which includes a \$50 fine;
- * The educator may receive a probation of months or years, which can include other conditions -- monitoring, for example -- but which also includes a \$75 fine;
- * The educator may receive a suspension which can last months or years, and can include conditions, and includes a \$100 fine;
- * The final choice is licensure revocation, which is permanent.

According to Smith, "by far and away" most cases of licensure revocation occur when sexual misconduct by an educator is an issue, none of which has been alleged in this situation.

Legislative summary (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — This is a summary list of bills (by bill number, lead sponsor and title) introduced through Thursday in the 89th General Assembly, except for appropriation bills, which, along with other bills and resolutions, may be found at the legislative website: www.arkleg.state.ar.us

HOUSE

HB1752, Ballinger - The Arkansas Second Amendment Liberties Safeguards Act.

HB1753, Slinkard - To amend the law concerning certain election administration duties; and to require the county clerk to perform certain election duties in lieu of the county board of election commissioners.

HB1754, Slinkard - To make technical corrections to the law concerning the use of paper ballots or electronic voting machines in a school election.

HB1755, Slinkard - To clarify the law regarding appeals to a county court from a county equalization board; and to prohibit a county court clerk from charging a fee for filing an appeal from a county equalization board.

HB1756, Slinkard - To amend the procedures for certain elections to fill vacancies.

HB1757, Hutchison - To regulate electric utilities and the eminent domain authority of electric utilities.

HB1758, Joint Budget Committee - To transfer the Arkansas Board of Health Education to the Arkansas Department of Health.

HB1759, Joint Budget Committee - To transfer the Arkansas State Board of Sanitarians to the Arkansas Department of Health.

HB1760, Joint Budget Committee - To transfer the Arkansas State Athletic Commission to the Arkansas Department of Health.

HB1761, Ratliff - To amend various provisions of the Arkansas Code concerning the Educational Excellence Trust Fund.

HB1762, Branscum - To remove the requirement for tuberculosis testing of home health workers.

HB1763, Nickels - To establish a cause of action against third parties who conduct background checks and release erroneous information.

HB1764, Nickels - Concerning the eligibility, application, process, and effect of the expungement or sealing of a person's record of a criminal conviction.

HB1765, T. Thompson - To regulate the sale of alcoholic beverages.

HB1766, Jean - To provide additional measures to collect delinquent property taxes, penalties and interest on mineral rights.

HB1767, Gillam - To include agriculture in the list of reserved uses of water before allocation.

HB1768, Talley - To amend the election process for school district board of director positions.

HB1769, Perry - To create an income tax credit for solar energy systems.

HB1770, Perry - To amend provisions of law concerning academic, fiscal and facilities distress of public schools and school districts; and to declare an emergency.

HB1771, D. Douglas - To amend the law concerning a municipality that operates a sewage collection system or sewage works and contracts with other political subdivisions.

HB1772, D. Douglas - To increase the individual sewage disposal permit fee.

HB1773, Cozart - To modify the limits of municipal territorial jurisdiction.

HB1774, McLean - To amend various provisions of the Arkansas Code concerning public school funding amounts.

HB1775, Kizzia - To amend the Arkansas Code concerning science, technology, engineering and mathematics education in Arkansas public schools.

HB1776, Kizzia - To amend the Arkansas Code concerning workforce education.

HB1777, Kizzia - To amend various provisions of Title 6 of the Arkansas Code concerning early childhood education.

HB1778, Kizzia - To establish a procedure to enforce safety on all public works projects.

HB1779, Holcomb - To permit the electronic display of proof of watercraft liability insurance coverage for proof of insurance and registration purposes.

HB1780, Mayberry - To require the House of Representatives and the Senate to establish the People First Advisory Legislative Session concerning disability issues.

HB1781, Hawthorne - To establish the Arkansas Court Appointed Special Advocates license plate.

HB1782, Linck - To clarify the right of first refusal of donated public school district buildings and real property.

HB1783, Linck - To require insurance on all buildings and facilities owned by a public school district; and to require insurance on all buildings listed in a public school district's academic facilities master plan program.

HB1784, Fite - Concerning central registry checks, disqualifying offenses, and other criminal records checks required under some employment terms.

HB1785, D. Douglas - To provide digital learning opportunities in public schools.

HB1786, Hutchison - To clarify the restrictions on the participation of a member of a state board or commission or a board member of an entity that receives state funds in a matter in which the member has a pecuniary interest.

HB1787, Kizzia - To grant representative authority to the Arkansas State Game and Fish Commission for governmental cooperation with wildlife purposes.

HB1788, Alexander - To allow a foster parent to place a foster child in a nonpublic school.

HB1789, Lowery - To allow home schooled students to participate in interscholastic activities.

HB1790, Broadway - Concerning who is required to consent to an adoption and who is entitled to a notice that an adoption proceeding has been initiated.

HB1791, Scott - To require revocation of the license of a health care provider who has been convicted of a sex crime; and to ensure the safety of patients of health care providers by requiring criminal background checks.

HB1792, Baine - To reduce taxes.

HB1793, McCrary - To create a private metal recycler oversight commission; to vest the commission with certain regulatory and enforcement powers; to determine membership; and to provide for the operations of the commission.

HB1794, McCrary - Concerning monetary transactions that involve a metal recycler or a person buying or selling certain metals.

HB1795, McCrary - Concerning the possession of, transportation of, sale, purchase or transaction of scrap metal; concerning criminal offenses involving scrap metal.

HB1796, Davis - To amend the Arkansas Sewage Disposal Systems Act.

HB1797, Davis - To amend the laws relating to municipal sewage systems.

HB1798, Nickels - To regulate the amendment of plats and bills of assurance and the filing of plats and bills of assurance.

HB1799, Wardlaw - To automate the review of abuse registries maintained by the Department of Human Services.

HB1800, Cozart - To amend the law concerning changes of polling sites.

HB1801, Hammer - Concerning the regulation of scrap metal transactions and addressing the problem of the theft of scrap metal.

HB1802, Wright - Concerning consumer credit and consumer financial services.

HB1803, B. Wilkins - To require that contracts for nonemergency transportation be awarded by competitive sealed proposals and submitted to the General Assembly; and to declare an emergency.

HB1804, Biviano - To provide for a review of mandated benefits by the State Insurance Department.

HB1805, Word - To prevent candidates from running for more than one (1) office under certain circumstances.

Notable Resolutions HR1031, Hutchison - To encourage the rejection of the Plains & Eastern Clean Line Transmission Project and Clean Line's request to operate as a public utility in Arkansas.

HR1032, Perry - To commend and encourage the relationship and economic relations between Taiwan and Arkansas and to commend Director General Liao for advancing economic and cultural exchange between Taiwan and Arkansas.

HR1033, E. Armstrong - To recognize the month of March as National Colorectal Cancer Awareness Month.

HR1034, Kizzia - To recognize March 11, 2013, as World Plumbing Day.

SENATE

SB812, J. Hutchinson - An act to amend the requirements for the director of the Department of Higher Education and for other staff of the Arkansas Higher Education Coordinating Board.

SB813, J. Woods - Concerning a prescription for a type of muscle relaxant; to amend the definition of objective findings enacted by Initiated Act 4 of 1948.

SB814, J. Key - To amend and update the Arkansas Comprehensive Testing, Assessment, and Accountability Program; and to declare an emergency.

SB815, Joint Budget Committee - To transfer the State Board of Registration for Professional Geologists to the Arkansas Geological Survey.

SB816, Elliott - To establish the Vision 2025 Legislative Commission on the Future of Higher Education; to provide for the appointment of its members; and to describe its purpose and responsibilities.

SB817, Maloch - To require that producing mineral interests be reappraised annually.

SB818, Rapert - To bar the disbursement of funds by the State to certain entities.

SB819, A. Clark - To revise the law concerning the process for a county judge to establish access easements for landlocked owners of real property to comport with due process.

SB820, Burnett - To authorize economic development incentives and the issuance of general obligation bonds in connection with a steel mill project under Amendment 82 to the Arkansas Constitution; and to declare an emergency.

SB821, K. Ingram - To amend the laws pertaining to initiative and referendum petitions; and to declare an emergency.

SB822, K. Ingram - To increase transparency with respect to initiated acts; and to require more complete disclosure by ballot question committees and legislative question committees.

SB823, Teague - To establish the Public School Safety Commission. SB824, D. Johnson - To provide enabling legislation for Amendment 89 to the Arkansas Constitution relating to energy efficiency bonds authorized by state entities.

SB825, U. Lindsey - Concerning reports for sales and use taxes.

SB826, B. King - To provide public school students with additional opportunities to pursue a more rigorous study of art or music; and to amend the requirements for visual art and music instruction in public schools.

SB827, S. Flowers - To amend Arkansas law concerning reappropriations by the General Assembly and to declare an emergency.

SB828, L. Chesterfield - To allow foster care board payments and adoption subsidies to be made by electronic funds transfer direct deposit.

SB829, Maloch - To implement the statutory changes recommended by the Task Force on Abused and Neglected Children.

SB830, A. Clark - To provide lifetime hunting licenses and fishing licenses to certain disabled veterans.

SB831, Files - To adopt recent changes to the Internal Revenue Code; and to make technical corrections to the income tax laws.

SB832, Files - To allow the extension of the period during which a county sales and use tax levied for capital improvements of a community college may be levied and shall not be replaced or reduced.

SB833, Elliott - To amend the Teacher Excellence and Support System.

SB834, J. Key - To amend various provisions of Title 6 of the Arkansas Code concerning education.

SB835, J. Key - To provide for audits of the Economic Development Incentive Quick Action Closing Fund by the Office of Economic and Tax Policy.

SB836, J. Key - To amend various provisions of the Arkansas Code concerning public education.

SB837, J. Key - Concerning school choice in Arkansas public education.

SB838, Rapert - To regulate State Treasury management practices and procedures; and to provide for the prudent investment and management of State Treasury funds.

SB839, Burnett - To allow a county to abolish the position of school district coordinator; and to amend provisions of law concerning county funds for the executive council and school coordinator position.

SB840, Elliott - To repeal the requirement that low voltage carbon monoxide detectors be placed in newly constructed homes.

SB841, Maloch - Concerning the sale of event tickets.

SB842, A. Clark - To extend the authority to counties to regulate the manner a property owner or other person controlling the property removes a vehicle, implement or piece of machinery.

SB843, Files - To authorize school districts and officers, agents, servants and employees of school districts to disclose employment information with or without the consent of a current or former employee.

SB844, J. Key - To amend the requirements for State Board of Education approval of a voluntary annexation or consolidation.

SB845, J. Key - To require the Arkansas Agriculture Department to study the benefits of entering into agricultural exchanges with other countries; and to require the Arkansas Agriculture Department to report to the General Assembly.

SB846, Bledsoe - To amend the law concerning the Gold Star Family special license plates.

SB847, Rapert - To amend the offense of negligent homicide to include driving while asleep or fatigued.

SB848, J. Key - To allow the use of saline systems in swimming pools.

SB849, Files - To make technical corrections to the Arkansas Video Services Act.

SB850, J. Hendren - To require that the unemployment stabilization tax shall be credited to the separate account of each employer; and to amend the stabilization tax rates for the unemployment compensation fund.

SB851, D. Johnson - To increase the required amount of motor vehicle liability insurance for public transit authorities transporting the general public.

SB852, Maloch - To regulate fees charged by the Board of Examiners in Counseling.

SB853, Teague - To create an exemption from the sales and use tax for dental appliances sold by or to dentists or certain other professionals.

SB854, Maloch - To amend Act 281 of 2012 concerning the State Administration of Justice Fund; and to declare an emergency.

Notable Resolutions

SR19, E. Cheatham - To support the growth of quality, affordable online education in the University of Arkansas system.

Calendar (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — This is a calendar of public events of the 89th General Assembly for today, the 54th day of the 2013 legislative session.

HOUSE

9 a.m. Aging, Children and Youth, Legislative and Military Affairs Committee, Room 130 9 a.m. State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee, Room 151 9 a.m. Insurance and Commerce Committee, Room 149 9 a.m. City, County and Local Affairs Committee, Multi-Agency Complex, Room B 9 a.m. Agriculture, Forestry and Economic Development Committee, Room 138 10 a.m. House convenes

SENATE

8 a.m. State Agencies and Governmental Affairs Committee, Old Supreme Court chambers 8 a.m. Public Health, Welfare and Labor Committee, Room 272 9 a.m. Senate convenes

School to lose pre-kindergarten (Arkansas Democrat-Gazette)

LITTLE ROCK — The Little Rock School District will discontinue prekindergarten classes at its newest and largest elementary school next year to make room for the growing kindergarten through fifth grade enrollment in the school's attendance zone.

The district sent letters this week to parents who had selected Dr. Don R. Roberts Elementary School as their first choice for their child's pre-kindergarten school assignment, noting the decision to eliminate the classes for 4-year-olds at Roberts and offering them the opportunity to re-pick their pre-kindergarten choices for next year.

Deborah Price, coordinator in the district's Student Registration Office, said the district's top priority is to serve the older pupils in the Roberts attendance zone.

"We regret it, but we have to house our kindergarten through fifth grade students first, and that school is just full," Price said.

School districts are not required by state law to offer pre-kindergarten classes, and parents are not required to enroll their children in them. However, the Little Rock district has offered tuition-free, pre-kindergarten classes taught by state certified teachers for more than 20 years.

The classes are located in nearly all district elementary schools and at three pre-kindergarten centers: Fair Park, Woodruff and Chicot early childhood centers.

The Little Rock district's 25,057-student enrollment this year includes as many as 1,500 pre-kindergartners.

The decision to no longer provide the four pre-kindergarten classes at Roberts comes at a time when many parents living near Roberts, in the northwest part of the city, are lobbying the School Board and district administrators to build a new middle school in that growing area.

Roberts Elementary opened in the 2010-11 school year and is at capacity this school year with an Oct. 1, enrollment of 899 pupils.

The pre-kindergarten decision also comes in the wake of President Barack Obama's call in his January State of the Union address for expanded access to high-quality early childhood education programs.

Frederick Fields, special assistant to the superintendent and senior director of student services in the Little Rock district, said Tuesday that district leaders are exploring options for adding pre-kindergarten seats at other elementary schools in the district to offset the loss of the Roberts seats.

The district also is exploring the possibility of offering prekindergarten at sites other than a school campus. No decisions have been finalized, he said.

The district has not yet assigned children to pre-kindergarten programs for the coming 2013-14 school year, Fields said. Letters with those assignments will be mailed to parents by April 19.

In the meantime, parents who want to reconsider their pre-kindergarten school choices in the wake of the Roberts classes closing may do so from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday at the district's Student Registration Office, 501 Sherman St. That is across East Capitol Avenue from the downtown post office.

No revised applications submitted by U.S. mail or by fax machines will be accepted.

For parents who had selected Roberts but who do not revise their pre-kindergarten list of choices, their second choice on their original applications will become their first choice in the lottery used to assign children to a pre-kindergarten school.

School Choice Legislation Filed in House (KARK, Channel 4)

LITTLE ROCK, AR - State Representative Randy Alexander filed school choice legislation Friday. The bill would allow parents of public school students in the 4th through 8th grades to transfer their children to any school of their choosing.

HB-1897, The Parental Choice Scholarship Program, would make the amount of funding a resident school district would get from state and local sources follow the student as a scholarship, to be applied by their parents to participating schools.

Participating schools could be a public school outside the resident school district, a charter school, a magnet school outside the resident school district, an alternative school outside the resident school district, or a private school.

Alexander says that scholarship amount is set at \$6,267 per pupil.

Alexander says that scholarship amount is set at \$6,267 per pupil.