

PHONE CONFERENCE OF STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

Friday, February 3, 1995

The State Board of Education had a phone conference on Friday, February 3, 1995 at 2:30 p.m. The phone conference was held in the Director's Board room.

In attendance at the meeting:

Elaine Scott, Chair, State Board of Education
Richard Smith, Vice-Chair, State Board of Education
Carl Baggett, State Board of Education
Bill Fisher, State Board of Education
Mitch Llewellyn, State Board of Education
Jim McLarty, State Board of Education
Rae Perry, State Board of Education
Sherry Walker, State Board of Education
 David Hughes of Southwest Times Record
 Mark Martin
 John Popla of Channel 5 KFSN
 Dr. Bennie Gooden
Max Parker, Public Relations for the Governor
Gene Wilhoit, Director, Arkansas Department of Education
Governor Jim Guy Tucker
Gayle Morris, Supervisor, Communications
Cynthia Howell, Arkansas Democrat-Gazette
Tim Gauger, Attorney General's Office
Rodger Callahan, Associate Director of Accountability
Charles Knox, Arkansas Association of Educational Administrators
Dr. Diane Sydoriak, Associate Director of Special Education
Dr. Emma Bass, Assistant to the Director for Policy Development
Mr. Reginald Wilson, Executive Assistant to State Board of Education
Diana Julian, Deputy Director
Brenda Matthews, Assistant to the Director for Legislative Services
Christen and Rich, Channel 11 KTHV

ISSUES DISCUSSED DURING PHONE CONFERENCE

- The Governor's School Funding Formula

Governor Tucker began the discussion with an overview of what brought us to this point. He pointed out that we have a court order that directs the State to achieve substantial equality of financial aid among students with regard to funds

used for maintenance and operations of schools. The Governor stated that students are not treated equally within our state where funding is concerned. The State is the senior partner in financing education in the state with 62% and rising. Local districts range between \$341.00 and \$6,685.00 spent per student and millage ranges from 4 to 56.4 mills. He stated this describes the inequality in student funding throughout the state. He also stated that we have a state statute which provides that we can hire a teacher for \$16,000 minimum in this state. With a wide disparity among districts in the minimum teacher salary, the inequality that exists among school districts in their financial ability to compete for teachers is self evident. He reiterated we are going to move to a fair treatment of children in this state financially.

The Governor mentioned constraints we are faced with in designing a system that moves to fair treatment of all children in the state. (1) the Arkansas Constitution under amendment 40 leaves the decision to the local district as to the level of the local millage and how it will be used. (2)The budget in the coming fiscal year will provide 2.6 billion dollars of revenues and we expect to spend half of that on the public schools.

The first step the Governor discussed in the funding formula was to assure that every student in the state has the same amount of money available in local revenue to be used at the discretion of the district. This would result in about \$1,503 per student every where in the state. The second step in the formula would be to assure that there is funding for a reasonable number of classroom teachers with an average salary of \$30,000 at a ratio of one teacher for every 20 students. He also stated that a regional school board would be formed for the proposed thirty-seven school districts. Governor Tucker also proposed a constitutional convention for next year with some amendments in the constitution that would make this process easier.

After several questions and responses between the Board and Governor Tucker, Elaine Scott asked the Board if they were ready to take a position in favor of the Governor's proposal. The Board agreed to have more discussion before taking a position.

- Vote to Appeal Judge Wright's Order in the Pulaski County Case

After a short discussion among the Board members and Attorney Tim Gauger, from the Attorney General's Office, Mr. Smith made the motion, and it was seconded by Mr. Llewellyn, to follow the Attorney General's recommendation to appeal the order. Jim McLarty voted "NO", Rae Perry voted to abstain and the other members voted for the appeal.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Recorded by Reginald Wilson