



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

MEMO

June 26, 1975

SUBJECT: Progress Report

TO: Honorable Eugene M. Fulmer
Director of Research

FROM: Greg White

This memorandum is organized into the major subject areas I have worked on within the last six months.

Our Socio-Economic Cultural Crisis:

This report was expanded from the original report completed last fall. New data on the decline in student academic performance, the Pennsylvania Educational Quality Assessment Program, Career Education, vocational program and guidance needs, juvenile delinquency in schools, and the economy were added. Since concluding the report, I have continued to gather additional data and information related to the subjects covered in the report.

Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee:

General research work, attendance at committee meetings, and other usual functions of staffing a committee have been performed. Research included study of the proposed recodification of the Military Code. In addition, I represented the minority chairman, Representative Lynch, on the "Operation Understanding" trip.

Recodification of the School Code:

I have attended meetings of the Education Committee with P.D.E. staff where the proposed code was reviewed and discussed on a line by line basis. I have continued to review the proposed changes and their effect on the educational system of the Commonwealth.

Educational Statistics:

At the request of Steve Freind and Mike Willman, Geoff Crego and I have begun to collect educational data on: Budgets, Personnel (P.D.E., teachers, etc.), Enrollment, Per pupil expenditures, Pupil performances indices. The material will be delivered to Steve and Mike shortly. Geoff and I have begun to analyze the data in order to compile a report for your office.

Miscellaneous:

Educational Finance - I have begun to review Senator Stauffer's plan to reform educational finance (S.B. 694,695,696) in order to prepare some comments as per your request.

Conferences Attended:

Council of Organizations for Education
Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce Legislative Conference
Manpower Research and Information Symposium
Pennsylvania Vocational Education Conference



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

MEMO

August 26, 1975

SUBJECT: Progress Report

TO: Honorable Eugene M. Fulmer

FROM: Greg White

Per your request see attached sheets.

GW:jms

PROGRESS REPORT

Projects over the last month:

1. Recodification:

Reviewed some of the testimony.

Reviewed amendments received to date.

Reviewed House Bill 770 in comparison with the current code.

Attended committee meeting at Allenberry, August 6, 7 and 8.

I have started work on a series of reports outlining actions the State Board of Education has taken under the current code. The reports detail specific areas where problems of explicit grants of power from the legislature to local schools conflict with implicit language concerning the purpose, powers, duties etc. of the State Board of Education. In addition, the reports will indicate questionable, if not illegal, sections taken by the State Board. The purpose of these reports is to bring the current operating practices of the State Board into focus as the section on the State Board is one of the most controversial areas of House Bill 770.

2. Educational Statistics Report:

Approximately 15 tables, charts etc. have been prepared detailing educational expenditures (total, personnel, per pupil etc.), pupil/teacher ratios, enrollment data, and other areas. A report summarizing the data needs to be written.

3. Valley Forge Veterans' Home:

A report outlining the present status concerning the acquisition, operations, and cost (current and future) of this facility was submitted to you on August 5, 1975.

4. Vocational Education Voucher Plan:

Jane Laffey and I have been working with the staff of the Department of Education on a proposal to develop a voucher system for vocational education. Two meetings with the P.D.G. staff have been held to this date. In addition, I have continued to study the area of expansion of vocational education.

5. Report on the advantages and disadvantages of changing primaries from spring to fall.

Projected activity over the next six months:

1. Routine committee work for the Military and Veterans' Affairs Committee.

2. Recodification:

Committee meetings are scheduled for September 9, 10 and 11.

Amendments from P.S.E.A. and many other interested educational groups have not been received as yet. In addition, many amendments from members are anticipated. This should take up the overwhelming majority of my time over the next six months.

Honorable Eugene M. Fulmer
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3. Finish the Educational Statistics Report.
4. I plan to keep myself appraised of developments regarding the school busing issue, such as the recent Detroit decision.
5. Continue working on the Voucher Plan for Vocational Education.



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
HARRISBURG

December 16, 1976

Mr. Greg White
B-4, Main Capitol
Harrisburg, Pa.

Dear Greg:

Based on discussions you recently had with Walt Plosila, we have reached decisions on where to locate you and other staff members. These assignments, to the best of our ability, have been made on the basis of your preferences and capabilities and where you might best contribute to the effective workings of the Minority Caucus. You have been assigned to work under the direction of Walt Plosila, Director of Research-Legislation. While we cannot make definite decisions on which committee(s) you will be assigned to provide staff support until discussions are held with the Minority Chairmen, to the maximum extent possible staff will be assigned on the basis of the past committee assignments and expertise.

Walt has given you some general assignments and I urge you to proceed on these in an expeditious fashion. Until Walt comes on board full time in March, I would appreciate your working through Otis Littleton, who will work as Assistant Director of Research-Legislation under Walt. I appreciate the fine work and commitment you have made in the past to the Caucus and I am sure this effort will continue in the future under this reorganization.

Sincerely,

Robert J. Butera

RJB:pb

cc: Mr. Walt Plosila



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA

December 22, 1976

MEMO

SUBJECT: Issues Memorandum

TO: Walter H. Plosila

FROM: Greg White

There will be several major issues facing the Education Committee this session and several major areas that readily lend themselves to an oversight role by the staff. The issues facing the Committee are fiscally and program oriented, while the oversight issues involve the operations and functioning of the schools and the Department of Education. I have already provided you with copies of reports concerning issues facing the Committee and some areas I believe can be developed into an oversight function.

MAJOR COMMITTEE ACTIVITIES, 1977-78 SESSION:

School Code Recodification

Very extensive work was done on this legislation last session including an analysis of the bill and an examination of the fiscal impact of the bill. Debate will continue from where it ended last session. The bill was reported from Committee but floor action was halted by the Democrats because of subsidy considerations and the controversial nature of the bill.

The work left to be done is very extensive, particularly in reference to details (costs, amendments, compromises, etc.) should we decide to oppose portions or all of the bill. Last session little was done to brief the Caucus on the provisions of the bill and the Caucus has no understanding of the fiscal implications of the bill.

A Caucus position of this bill is difficult. I doubt whether anyone truly understands the collective ramifications of the recodification. Several hundred amendments were adopted in Committee with approximately 125 remaining for floor action. Amendments were made to try and tighten control over the bureaucracy and the curriculum section of the bill, but the nature of the amendments and some of the compromises made, in conjunction with PDE intentions and activities, suggest that little will change with respect to the Legislature losing control over the school system. Unless we take an active and directive role in oversight even the efforts with the amendments to H.B. 770 will be of little value.

Politically, PSEA is a strong advocate of the bill, primarily because Chapter 51 on personnel enhances the position of teachers. Also the term of a school board member has been reduced from 6 to 4 years. PSEA has actively sought this provision, particularly as it eliminates its passive role in school board elections.

I believe that some of the positions advocated by PSEA will cost considerable amounts of money. The fiscal note claims a first year savings of \$6 million, but that figure is a fabrication. A model for analyzing the fiscal impact of the bill indicates costs of \$30 million. While the costs of the bill will never be precisely identified, I do believe additional costs will be extensive.

Subsidy Increase/Subsidy Reform

These are two issues that are related but also separate from each other due to political considerations. The schools are in a fiscal crisis and numerous attempts were made last session to increase subsidy payments. The Department of Education has made subsidy reform one of its major legislative priorities (along with the School Code). However, it is possible that a subsidy increase will be moved without reforming the subsidy formula, thereby making the study of these issues independent. It is also possible that one or both of these issues will become entangled with the School Code or the tax increase problem. Irrespective of how the legislative games are played, these issues will require constant staff attention.

The schools need money until they, or the Legislature for them, find ways to improve operational efficiency. If additional monies are not made available the Commonwealth will be faced with local school districts raising property taxes or becoming "distressed" school districts (a form of receivership). It is too early to make recommendations on the subsidy reform proposal, which even if adopted will probably be changed by the Legislature. A tentative guess would indicate that suburban and some other districts in Republican seats may gain less than other districts. It should be noted that PSEA and maybe the House Democratic Education chairman will oppose the reform measure.

Commonwealth University

This is a PDE legislative priority for this session. This concept would place all of the state colleges, but not state-related universities, under one umbrella. Last session, this proposal became S.B. 224, which was reported from Committee and then became stalled on the calendar. It has been a controversial issue in the past, but the Department wants to relinquish its responsibility for the day to day operations of the state colleges.

Life-long Learning

This is a PDE term for adult post-secondary and continuing education. It is essentially a redefinition, with some cosmetic changes, of the open-college concept embodied in S.B. 926 of last session. The bill was reported from Committee with Senator Reibman's support, but it also became stalled on the calendar. This is also one of PDE's legislative priorities.

Collective Bargaining

The Governor has initiated a review of Act 195, collective bargaining for public employees. The study should be finished next December, but I believe it should be monitored in some form through attendance at meetings, hearings, discussion with staff, etc.

Collective Bargaining - Administrative Personnel

Last session the House Education Committee considered a bill to grant a form of collective bargaining rights to administrative and supervisory personnel. A similar proposal was considered in the prior session. The education community split into several factions on this issue. I expect a proposal to be considered again this session. Representative Pancoast has been a sponsor of this legislation, although I am not sure he strongly supports the concept. It is difficult from a management perspective to see any merit in such a proposal unless it has a no strike provision and is so weak as to render the legislation almost meaningless.

Intermediate Units

Last session, the House Sub-committee on Basic Education held hearings at various intermediate units to inquire about their role, the improvements they would suggest in school operations, etc. The hearings were in response to a report on the functioning of intermediate units by the Legislative Budget and Finance Committee. I expect some action to be taken with respect to their funding and operations in this session. This area needs study before any recommendations will be valuable.

OVERSIGHT:

Quality of Education - Project 81, Educational Quality Assessment, Long Range Planning

Educational quality and financing are two major issues in the educational research area. The Department of Education has integrated EQA, and indirectly LRP, into a new initiative for improvement in the quality of education; Project 81. The Department describes it as a combination effort in the following manner:

- a redefinition of the purposes of public education in terms of the competencies which children and young people should be acquiring at various levels;
- a plan for maximizing community involvement in the schools, including both the community's use of schools and the school's use of the resources in the community;
- a plan for shifting State Board curriculum and graduation requirements from their present dependence on courses, credits, and Carnegie units to the newly defined competencies.

This program is in part, PDE's answer to the Career Education movement and a device to allow them to state they are actively trying to improve the quality of our graduates.

The EQA and LRP memos I gave you earlier indicated problems I feel exist with both programs. The Department's first year timetable for implementing Project 81 and State Board of Education meetings indicate a revision of the Ten Quality Goals before the program gets underway. The problem with linking educational quality and the defining of educational objectives to an attitudinal system of evaluation and measurement rather than a cognitive assessment leaves the schools evaluating areas over which they have little control. I think the education system should be responsible for encouraging achievement in and evaluating areas for which it is directly responsible and a strong possibility exists that Project 81 will be an elaborate smokescreen without improving the quality of graduates.

The constitution of Pennsylvania places the responsibility for providing a "thorough and efficient system of public education" with the Legislature. If the bureaucracy is permitted to define educational objectives and quality the only role left for the Legislature is that of fund raiser and provider. Some attempts have been made in this direction with amendments to the new School Code, but concerted and coordinated action is necessary.

Educational financing

Educational financing is a problem that has a direct impact on the Legislature as it has not delegated authority in this area. As stated earlier, education financing and reform will be major issues next session. However, little has been done to objectively study what has caused the financial crisis. Several interesting points were made in a Pennsylvania Economy League report:

In 1957, the value of tax exempt property totaled 19% of the state's assessed value. Today an estimated 25% is exempt.

"In the face of inflation, higher costs for contracted services and salary and wage increases, school officials must make a concerted effort to reduce costs in relation to the decrease in enrollments by eliminating inefficient programs (where not mandated), by reducing professional and operating personnel, and by more

efficiently utilizing physical plants. In addition, with Act 195 (the Commonwealth's Collective Bargaining Law) school officials must improve their labor relations capability in order to meet and deal effectively at the bargaining table with public employee organizations.

In many respects, then, state subsidy may not be the real reason for increases in taxes. The increases may be caused by higher staffing levels than required, reluctance to close unneeded school facilities, and salary increases which exceed the state average and the cost of living--matters mostly controlled by local school boards. Also, state mandated responsibilities for school districts and inflation have caused costs to rise significantly.

The solution to the problem facing many districts is to reduce overhead. A closer examination of the expenditure side of school budgets is needed rather than concentrating solely on the state subsidy issue. Hard decisions lie in the hands of the community and elected school directors."

Community Colleges, State Colleges - Associates Degrees

The Department of Education is pushing amendments to regulations to further facilitate the growth of community colleges and associate degree programs. The regulations also promote credit for life experience, part time student programs, etc. The Department also wants to greatly expand the granting of associate degrees by the state colleges. These regulation changes are similar to positions advocated by the Department with its Life-long learning concept and specifically S.B. 926 (Open College). The development of these regulations and programs must be monitored to insure against bureaucratic initiatives the Legislature may not want and may later have to fund.

Oversight Role

In our meeting, I gave you a draft of legislation to create an oversight commission for public education. Also attached was a draft of an amendment I prepared for H.B. 770. Control over the educational system has progressively slipped from the Legislature's hand. Language was added to the School Code recodification placing the chairmen of the House and Senate Committees on the State Board of Education to try and slow this trend, however, I am not certain this was the best means of oversight or that this provision will remain in the School Code as the bill moves through the House and Senate. Serious consideration should be given concerning approaches to an effective oversight role. The Commonwealth spends over half of the general fund budget for education; yet, the Republican Party, has not had a concerted and directed position on education since I have worked here. It is possible that we have had one and no one knew it; including me.

SPECIAL ISSUE:

Increase in taxes

Since 1955 state spending has grown $2\frac{1}{2}$ times faster than the personal income of Pennsylvanians. When the rapid growth of local government spending is added in it becomes obvious that the government has prospered much more than the citizens who finance its programs. This trend shows little signs of abating but an effective measure to control this situation could be a valuable asset to taxpayers and the Republican Party.

During the 1973-74 session, Representative Lee Taddonio introduced legislation (H.B. 1541) that would place a constitutional limitation on taxes and spending and further provide that the growth in spending could be no higher than the growth in the personal income level of the people of Pennsylvania. The concept was developed by Nobel Prize winning economist Milton Friedman and offers the Republican Party an excellent forum to regain the initiative in its efforts to convince the public that we want to control the growth of government. I think such a proposal should be attached to any tax increase package as it moves through the General Assembly.