

## MEMO

To: Michael Boyd  
From: Kelly Riley  
Date: February 22, 2000  
Subject: Senate Education Committee Hearing on Appointed Superintendents

The Senate Education Committee held a public hearing today to obtain input on the current bills introduced to require school superintendents to be appointed. Below are notes from the hearing.

- SB 2488 – Being discussed as I entered the meeting. Parents concerned the proposed accountability measures will result in schools becoming known as “smart kids school v. dumb kids school.” A parent from Tunica County stated that North Carolina’s incentive program has cost \$125 million in one year for incentives and for salaries of evaluators. Teachers are concerned that their input is not being sought and request that any future accountability legislation passed require teacher input in the development of such legislation.
- Rowan Taylor, Chairman of the State Board of Education, said the State Board supports appointed superintendents because it provides for a broader group and larger pool of qualified personnel as opposed to electing superintendents from the residents of the county or district. He also addressed a question raised as to the ineffectiveness of conservators (Tunica County) and reminded the committee that the State Board can’t initiate programs under a conservator, rather the conservator only has limited power over some school board actions.
- Lynn Evans, Jackson Public School Board Member, said that she supports appointed superintendents because of the larger pool of educated and qualified personnel. She said that parental/community involvement is still recognized because the board members who select the superintendents are themselves appointed (as in the case of JPS) for their involvement/leadership/concern. She did point out that the flexibility of the law (appointed or elected) has been advantageous due to different needs/desires of communities.
- Bobby Whittington, elected superintendent of Amite County schools, said that there is no higher honor for a superintendent than to be appointed to his position by the local voters. He said that the citizens of the county know better than the five-member school board as to the most qualified person to be superintendent. He said that it is a right of citizens, especially those in rural communities, to elect the superintendent and that it is not fair for a limited five-member board to appoint the superintendent.

- Elected superintendent of Choctaw County Schools (2000 SDE directory says Barry Stidham) stated that the elected school board might not have the qualifications themselves to appoint a qualified superintendent. He said that there has been a lot of talk of how appointing superintendents would take the politics out of the system. He said that a school board can be more political than the voters and gave the example of his board that cut his salary by \$21,000 after he took office, although he is the most educated person to hold the position. He asked the committee if they were the parents in the school district, would they want this board appointing/selecting the superintendent of schools?
- Gentleman from Greenville with the Echo Group (?) said that appointed school boards offer no accountability to the voters of the community. He said that there is no perception of city council elections having anything to do with school issues, although the council most often appoints the school board. He favors elected school board members because it increases the accountability of these boards in separate school districts. He said city council members need to have the perk of appointing school board members taken away. As to appointed superintendents, the gentleman said that appointment opens the pool wider than just those who live in the city or the county. He said that appointment of superintendent by the school board would be accountable to the community because the community elects the school board.
- A mother from Drew said that school board should be elected, while superintendents should be appointed by the board in order to ensure that the school board, rather than the superintendent, is the governing authority in the district.

Committee members raised the following questions:

- Senator Nunnelee asked if all municipal separate school district boards were appointed. The gentleman from Greenville explained, and was concurred with by Bob Davidson, that the law allows municipal separate districts to have up to 2 members elected if there are enough constituents of the school district, but outside of the municipal limits, for such as provided for in the law. Bob Davidson said that there are some county-wide special separate districts (such as Adams County) where the supervisors appoint the board and the superintendent. Judy Rhodes said that this is also the case w/ the Hinds County School District, which has an appointed superintendent.

Nunnelee said that his concern is of “taxation without representation.” He is concerned about constituents who live outside city limits, but are served by school district, so pay taxes for school, yet have no voice if the school board appoints the superintendent, rather than the constituents being able to vote for the superintendent. He asked if there has ever been suit filed relevant to that and David Watkins (counsel for the Superintendents’ Assoc) said that a House

member filed suit a few years ago, but that the suit has lain dormant with no action.

- Senator Jordan asked if there is any correlation between Level 1 schools and appointed or elected superintendents. Judy Rhodes said that SDE has done some work, but that there is no significant difference in accreditation scores of elected and appointed systems.