

Meeting Minutes  
Governmental Services Committee  
Taxation and Budget Reform Commission  
301 Senate Office Building  
Tallahassee, Florida  
Thursday, November 29, 2007  
10:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m.

**Committee Members:** *Roberto “Bobby” Martinez, Chair, Barney Barnett, Martha Barnett, Mark Bostick, Talbot “Sandy” D’Alemberte, Bruce Kyle, Robert “Bob” McKee, Les Miller, Jr., Randy Miller, Jade Moore, James Scott*

**Members Present:**

Roberto “Bobby” Martinez, Chair  
Barney Barnett  
Martha Barnett  
Mark Bostic  
Talbot “Sandy” D’Alemberte  
Robert “Bob” McKee  
Randy Miller  
Jade Moore  
Jim Scott

**Members Absent:**

Bruce Kyle  
Les Miller

Chairman Martinez called the meeting to order at 10:35 am. Staff called roll and announced the presence of a quorum.

In his opening remarks, Chair Martinez thanked the TBRC staff, especially Robert Shave, as well as members of the Department of Education staff for all of their hard work.

Chair Martinez stated that the first item on the agenda to be taken up by the Committee is the issue of Education. Each member of the Committee received the reports prior to the meeting. He explained that his objective for presenting such a comprehensive report on Education during this meeting is to provide a reference source for all members to have helpful information for discussion. The chairman then suggested that in this meeting he wanted the committee to discuss recommendations that would be passed on to the full Commission. Chair Martinez reminded the committee members that the recommendations may be put forward as either formal or informal statutory recommendations or constitutional amendments.

Chair Martinez started the discussion by outlining the issues he would like to discuss under the topic of Education:

- Bright Futures
- Class Size Amendment
- Dedicated funding source for Community Colleges
- Continuation of funding for Just Read, Florida!
- Teaching Profession (including whether it should be reformed, and a look at compensation, recruiting, preparation, and training)
- School Choice Options, McKay Scholarships, and the Corporate Tax Credit

Chair Martinez then opened the floor for further suggestions.

Commissioner D'Alemberte stated he would like to discuss the issue of the Florida Prepaid College Program. He felt that the Prepaid Program puts a straight jacket around the system and needs to be discussed. He acknowledged that the topic had been mentioned before by Commissioner Martha Barnett, but wanted to reiterate the point of talking about dedicated sources of funding for Education. Commissioner D'Alemberte pointed out that he would like to make sure that gambling funds particularly be distributed properly in the Education system as initially planned.

Commissioner Martha Barnett expressed that she felt it was important to talk about the whole concept of dedicating funding sources for VPK through 12<sup>th</sup> grade.

Adding those topics to the list, Chair Martinez proceeded with a discussion on Bright Futures. He suggested that Bright Futures should be modified and asked that there be more public review by the committee. Chair Martinez also expressed the need to have an award cap, link the award to merit as well as a need-based component, and adjust the renewal requirements to require students to earn a higher GPA.

Commissioner McKee wanted to get a further explanation of what was broken about Bright Futures. Specifically, he wanted to know, if it is under funded, are dollars not going to the right students.

Chair Martinez responded that Bright Futures, in his opinion, should contain a needs-based component. He added that \$400 million is merit based and \$50 million is need based. He believes that there should be a scholarship that rewards performance, but it is currently out of proportion. Chair Martinez feels that the money should be reapportioned to a formula that would be increase the needs-based portion.

Commissioner McKee agreed with a bifurcated system where they do not become competing forces, but helps both the lower income students and rewards meritorious scholarships.

Chair Martinez responded by saying that staff will look at this issue and come back with options that would seek to obtain the members' objectives.

Commissioner Randy Miller added that the Bright Futures program was created as the result of a program started in Georgia that used lottery money for educational programs to reward high-performing students. This program was intended as an incentive for students to go to school in Georgia. Commissioner Miller then asked for what additional purpose the money that Florida allocates for needs-based scholarships should be used.

There was a brief discussion on the Florida Resident Access Grant (FRAG) program. Commissioner D'Alemberte stated that Bright Futures puts Legislators in a bad place and that there should be needs-based testing.

The Chair then recommended that the committee accept the proposal made by Wayne Blanton, Executive Director of the Florida School Boards Association, and Bill Montfort, CEO of the Florida Association of District School Superintendents on class size. There was discussion about the Class Size Amendment among the committee. The Chair asked that this be submitted as a Committee Proposal.

Commissioner Martha Barnett suggested that staff begin drafting language designating what to do with the savings. She stated that more data, including a 10-year history of the Florida Education Finance Program funding formula, was needed.

Susan Skelton, TBRC Executive Director, informed the committee that the motion needs to be introduced as a committee proposal. The proposed committee measure on the Class Size Amendment was voted favorably to be introduced as a committee proposal. The language provided by Mr. Montfort and Mr. Blanton was adopted as draft language, minus the final paragraph of the document provided.

The committee then took up the topic of community college funding. Chair Martinez offered a motion to introduce as a committee proposal the opportunity for counties to have a local option sales tax. Dr. Will Holcombe, Chancellor of the Florida Community College System, gave testimony on this issue. The issue was adopted as a committee proposal to be drafted by staff and Commissioner Bob McKee was selected to take the lead role on the creation of the proposal.

Commissioner Martha Barnett asked the committee to consider community college attendance as an entitlement program and made available to everyone. Dr. Holcombe stated that there were six states currently reviewing legislation concerning this issue.

There was a motion to direct staff to work on a proposal that every high school graduate in the State of Florida should receive a free community college education. The motion passed.

There was a vote to submit an informal statutory recommendation on continued funding for Just Read, Florida! The motion passed unanimously.

The next topic of discussion was Education Funding. The question raised in this discussion was why PECO funds are down. Staff was directed to gather information from other states on dedicated funding sources for education.

Next, the committee discussed Teacher Compensation. It was decided that a task force to evaluate the profession of teachers was an area worthy further review. This task force would gather information regarding teacher compensation, recruiting, preparation, and training.

School Choice was the next item on the agenda. There was discussion among commissioners regarding scholarships and the raising of standards of the Volunteer Pre-Kindergarten Program (VPK). Commissioners also discussed statutory support for School Choice program, the Corporate Tax Credit program, and legal memos regarding Bush v. Holmes and the Blaine Amendment on VPK. After some debate on the issue, Chair Martinez indicated that Commissioners may choose to sponsor individual proposals on any of these topics. However, at this point, the Governmental Service Committee will not take up School Choice as a committee proposal.

Next on the agenda was Public Safety and Corrections. Chair Martinez made mention of the presentation that had been given by James McDonough, Secretary of the Department of Corrections, and the recommendations that he brought before the committee. The purpose of his recommendations was to lower the cost of corrections in Florida and to improve public safety. There was discussion among the committee members regarding recidivism, the Parole Commission, the 96% Rule, Faith and Character Based Initiatives, and the 85% Rule. Staff was directed to put together language for each of the proposals that were presented by Secretary McDonough. It was decided that during the December 14, 2008 committee meeting there would be a discussion with stakeholders on these issues. There was also discussion on requiring transparency of Sheriffs' Departments and Constitutional Officers' budgets. Commissioner Randy Miller agreed to take the lead on these topics.

With no further discussion, the meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm.