

Meeting Minutes
Governmental Services Committee
Taxation and Budget Reform Commission
Senate Office Building, Room 301
Tallahassee, Florida
July 20, 2007
8:30 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.

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

Members Present:

Roberto Martinez, Chair
Barney Barnett
Martha Barnett
Mark Bostick (by phone)
Bruce Kyle (by phone)
Robert “Bob” McKee
Lesley “Les” Miller, Jr.
Randy Miller
Jade Moore
James Scott

Other Commissioners Present:

Darryl Rouson
Chair Bense (for portions of the meeting)

Members Excused:

Talbot “Sandy” D’Alemberte

Chair Martinez called the Governmental Services Committee meeting to order at 8:30 a.m.

Staff called the roll and the presence of a quorum was announced.

The committee heard presentations from a panel of presenters that included the Florida School Boards Association by Dr. Wayne Blanton; the Florida Association of District School Superintendents by Dr. Bill Montford; Washington County Superintendent Calvin Stevenson; Hillsborough County Superintendent Jim Hamilton; and Mr. Vernon Carlton on behalf of Collier, Palm Beach, and Monroe county school districts on issues related to K-12 education funding and the impacts of implementation of the Class-Size Amendment to the Florida Constitution on district school budgets. Although the panel members noted their displeasure and concerns for the substantial fiscal impact on school budgets of the

amendment and indicated that the same money spent on teacher compensation likely would have a greater beneficial impact on student achievement, the panel members expressed their support for the goals of the amendment, but asked for some implementing flexibility as it will become increasingly more difficult and impractical to implement the requirements of the amendment at the individual classroom level. In response to questioning from Commissioner Martinez, this panel indicated its support for a constitutional amendment that would modify the requirements of the Class-Size Amendment by making the class size limits be determined at the school wide level instead of at the individual classroom level.

Mr. Mark Pritchett, Executive Vice President of the Collins Center, and Dr. Doug Tuthill of the Collins Center, made a presentation on school choice issues and education innovation and efficiencies in the delivery of education services. Speaking on behalf of the Collins Center, the presenters expressed their support for the quality and efficiency benefits demonstrated in Florida by the educational innovations of the Charter schools, the McKay Scholarships, the Corporate Tax Credit (CTC) Scholarships, and the Voluntary Prekindergarten (VPK) programs. The presenters felt that it was important for the Florida Legislature to have the legal flexibility to continue to support these, and explore other, innovative programs to meet the diverse and growing needs of Florida's population in the coming years and, speaking on behalf of the Collins Center, recommended a constitutional amendment that would ensure the Legislature have this legal authority not impeded by the Florida Supreme Court's decision in *Bush v. Holmes*.

Mr. Robert Nabors, on behalf of the Constitutional Adequacy Commission, made a brief presentation on the possible impacts of Florida's strict constitutional language relative to provision of an "adequate" education. In a discussion with the committee, Mr. Nabors indicated that a strict application of the state's constitutional standard could create a scenario in which the Supreme Court would set the appropriations amount for public education. This scenario would be an obvious departure from the separation of powers now in place in Florida government and would remove the power of the people, vested in the legislature, to set the state's budget. No recommendations to resolve this concern were offered.

Chair Martinez announced that staff had polled the members of the committee and that a tentative meeting schedule for the Governmental Services Committee for August and September would include meetings in Orlando, Tallahassee or Tampa on the following dates:

August 1 – Orlando Airport Hyatt hotel: Discussion of Higher Education issues

August 17 – Tallahassee (location TBA): Discussion of Health Care issues

August 21 – Orlando Airport Hyatt hotel: Public Safety issues

September 10 – Location TBA: Transportation issues

September 20 – Location TBA (in conjunction with Jacksonville public hearing):
infrastructure, water, DCF, and other issues

Meeting times and other schedule details will be posted on the commission website and members will be notified by e-mail.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:32 a.m.