

Legislative History for Connecticut Act

HB 6519	PA 698	1969
House	4939-4945	(7)
Senate	3226	(1)
Education	533-534, 536-539, 544-553	(16)
		Total - 24 p

Transcripts from the Joint Standing Committee Public Hearing(s) and/or Senate
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GEN. ASSEMBLY
HOUSE

PROCEEDINGS
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VOL. 13

PART 11

4893-5297

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Della Vecchia of the 26th District.

THE SPEAKER:

The gentleman from the 26th.

MR. DELLA VECCHIA: (26th)

Mr. Speaker, the town of Southington purchased this land in question in the late 40's from a private individual for about \$7,000. The land was given to the State for the customary \$1.00. In September of 1962 while I was serving as a member of the Board of Selectmen, the town gave to the State ten acres of prime land which is to be used to build the proposed new armory. I feel that it is right that the Town of Southington be given the opportunity to repurchase this land which they presented to the State in 1948. The Town Counsel of Southington is receptive to this purchase. I urge that this bill be approved. Thank you.

THE SPEAKER:

Will you remark further? If not, the question is on adoption of the bill. All those in favor, say Aye. Those opposed, No. The Ayes have it, and the bill is PASSED.

THE CLERK:

Calendar 1392. Substitute for House Bill No. 6519. An Act concerning Revision of the Laws Governing the Establishment and Operation of Regional School Districts.

THE SPEAKER:

The gentleman from the 73rd.

MR. MONDANI: (73rd)

Mr. Speaker, I move acceptance of the Joint Committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

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THE SPEAKER:

The question is on acceptance of the Committee's favorable report and passage of the bill. Will you remark?

MR. MONDANI: (73rd)

Mr. Speaker, the Clerk has an Amendment.

THE SPEAKER:

The Clerk will please read the Amendment.

THE CLERK:

House Amendment Schedule "A", offered by Mr. Mondani and Mr.

LaGrotta;

In Section 1, line 63 add the following: (e) Any temporary regional school study committee established before the passage of this act shall continue its study in accordance with the procedures and mandates of this act, but shall not be required to change its membership. The provisions of section 4 shall apply.

In section 16, line 53, strike the first sentence following "(b)" and insert the following in lieu thereof: "Annual receipts from taxation means the receipts from taxation of the member towns for the fiscal year next preceding the close of the last fiscal year of such regional school district."

In line 73, strike "average" and "reported".

Delete line 74.

In line 75, strike the material before "or".

In line 78, strike "average".

In line 81, strike "average".

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The gentleman from the 73rd.

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MR. MONDANI: (73rd)

Mr. Speaker, I move adoption of House Amendment Schedule "A".

THE SPEAKER:

The question is on the adoption of House Amendment Schedule "A".

Will you remark?

MR. MONDANI: (73rd)

Mr. Speaker, the first part of House Amendment Schedule "A" would insure that any regional school study committee now operative before the passage of this act, would be allowed to continue their work and would not be interrupted, and would then report, and their report would check into the proceedings set forth in this act. The second major section of the Amendment would amend the law to give regional school districts the benefits the municipalities receive under House Bill No. 6588, File 1449, which just passed this afternoon. Instead of using a three-year average of receipts for taxation to figure the debt limit, the average receipts of taxation of the member towns for the preceding fiscal year would be used. I urge support of this Amendment.

THE SPEAKER:

Will you remark further on the Amendment? The gentleman from the 170th.

MR. LaGROTTA: (170th)

Mr. Speaker, I support the Amendment.

THE SPEAKER:

Will you remark further on the Amendment? If not, all those in favor of House Amendment Schedule "A" say Aye. Those opposed, No. The Ayes have it. The Amendment is ADOPTED. It is technical. You may proceed.

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THE SPEAKER:

The gentleman from the 73rd.

MR. MONDANI: (73rd)

Mr. Speaker, in urging passage of the bill now amended by House Amendment Schedule "A", this is a major revision to the school code relating to regional school districts. The bill represents a culmination of almost two years of research and discussion of the laws concerning regional school districts. The interim Education Committee studied the problems, and made certain recommendations for improvement in these laws in December 1968. I think that the interim committee and sub-committee would like to make special commendation to Mrs. Mary Lou Allen who, herself, is a member of a Regional Board of Education, and who contributed greatly to this study and helped us in preparing the bill now before us. I would like to yield, Mr. Speaker, to Representative LaGrotta, who also worked with us very diligently on this committee.

THE SPEAKER:

The gentleman from the 170th.

MR. LaGROTTA: (170yh)

Mr. Speaker, I rise to support this bill. It has been my pleasure to work with Mr. Mondani and many other members of the Education Committee upon what would be called a giant housekeeping bill. Two years ago we offered inducements to have towns join together in regional school districts, and perhaps we moved a little too fast, because some of the conditions allowing for the dissolution of the boards after they had formed the regional K through 12 had no statutory basis. We endeavored on the interim Education Committee to face these problems and try to resolve them in what we think

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is a reasonable manner. Substantially, the bill addressed themselves to that problem, and also to the problem of when three towns decide to join together in a K through 12, the various equities that the towns owned in connection with their school plans would have to be adjusted. The bill basically sets up the structure to form study committees who would reach mutual agreements on some of these problems. After they have reached the agreements, the bill structures a system of properly held hearings so that towns individually can hearing the findings of their study, and collectively and individually can vote on them. It does not in any way change the power of the town in connection with its authority to join regions, and any grants that are as involved as construction, ADM, will, under this bill, be going to the region. It is a mammoth bill, as you see, before you, and I would defer to Mr. Mondani to explain further areas of it.

THE SPEAKER:

The gentleman from the 73rd.

MR. MONDANI: (73rd)

Mr. Speaker, as Mr. LaGrotta pointed out, there are many, many technical sections that needed to be changed, and in changing them we provided a system whereby the local community would be allowed to make many, many choices in terms of the election of the board of education, the size of the board of education, and the distribution of capital property. The State in no way requires one system over the other, and leaves the option open. The problems of transfer within districts, requests for withdrawals, requests for addition of new towns, again will operate very smoothly. We think that this measure before us now has amended the statutes relating to regional districts in such a way that we will find many more K through 12 districts

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on the books when we come back in two years. I urge its adoption, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER:

Will you remark further? The lady from the 93rd.

MRS. GREEN: (93rd)

Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I will very briefly state that about what I was going to say has already been said, but I do believe that this establishes much clearer guidelines for the organization of these school districts, and the fact that the towns will be voting on not only to join the districts, but also on the plans, will certainly eliminate confusion after the region is formed.

THE SPEAKER:

The gentleman from the 40th.

MR. MAYER: (40th)

Mr. Speaker, for the purpose of the legislative intent to the gentleman from the 73rd, through you, sir, a question. In Section 8, line 89, there is mention there "In a case of a tie vote in the balloting for any officers, such tie vote shall be broken by lot." Is it true, sir, that this is referred to the tie mentioned in this particular section is an unbreakable tie?

THE SPEAKER:

Does the gentleman from the 73rd care to answer?

MR. MONDANI: (73rd)

Through you, Mr. Speaker, yes, it is understood that this would be an unbreakable tie, and that all efforts would be made to resolve it before going to the lot.

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MR. MAYER: (40th)

Thank you, very much, Mr. Speaker.

THE SPEAKER:

Will you remark further on the bill? The question is on passage of the bill as amended by House Amendment Schedule "A". All those in favor, say Aye. Those opposed, No. The Ayes have it. The bill is PASSED.

THE CLERK:

Calendar 1393. Substitute for House Bill No. 8670. An Act concerning State Grants and Loans for School Building Projects.

THE SPEAKER:

The gentleman from the 1st.

MR. KENNELLY: (1st)

Mr. Speaker, may Calendar 1393, Substitute for House Bill No. 8670, File 1484 be passed retaining its place on the Calendar?

THE SPEAKER:

Hearing no objection, it is so ordered.

THE CLERK:

Calendar 1394. Modified House Bill No. 7972. An Act concerning the Connecticut Student Loan Foundation Law.

THE SPEAKER:

The gentleman from the 132nd.

MR. McLOUGHLIN: (132nd)

Mr. Speaker, I move for acceptance of the Joint Committee's favorable report and passage of the bill.

THE SPEAKER:

The question is on acceptance of the committee's favorable

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THE CHAIR:

Will you remark further. If not, as many who are in favor signify by saying aye, opposed. The aye's have it and the bill is passed.

THE CLERK:

Calendar No. 1389, File No. 1478. Favorable report of the Joint Standing Committee on Education on Substitute House Bill No. 6519. An Act concerning Revision of the Laws Governing the Establishment and Operation of Regional School Districts, as amended by House Amendment Schedule A.

SENATOR SCHAFFER:

Mr. President, I move for acceptance of the Committees favorable report and passage of the bill, as amended.

THE CHAIR:

Question is on passage of this bill as amended. Will you remark.

SENATOR SCHAFFER:

Mr. President, while this is a very long bill, what it actually does, it clarifies the existing regional school district laws. It makes no actual changes in the philosophies and functions of the law but does re-word it so that it reads in a more understandable and efficient fashion.

THE CHAIR:

Are there further remarks on this bill. If not, as many who are in favor signify by saying aye, opposed. The aye's have it and the bill is passed.

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proposed legislation it concerns me that within the bills I see no mention of the participation of non-public schools and, therefore, no benefits would accrue to the 122,000 children attending non-public schools.

Since I feel that the proposed bills represent a thrust towards greater emphasis on regionalization of education services and programs, a thrust which will most likely accelerate in the future, and since non-public schools have the desire to participate in such a thrust towards regional cooperation, I respectfully bring this matter to the Education Committee's attention at this time in the hope that out of their concern for the education of all children in Connecticut, the Committee will be cognizant of the non-public schools desire for involvement and participation.

The precedent for such involvement and participation has already been established by the non-public schools' mandatory involvement in Title III Programs under the Federal Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965.

Since House Bill 6481 and House Bill 6497 will help to permit programs initiated with Title III funds to continue, and will assist in their more effective operation - programs, I reiterate, in which non-public schools have been and will continue to be involved - I sincerely hope that the Committee will give serious consideration to their involvement in the legislation you are considering here this morning. Thank you.

Carol Cook, Washington, Connecticut. I am here primarily as a parent. I have five children in grades kindergarten through 12. I've also been a member of CAFE's Regionalization Committee and I am a member of the Board of Education of Regional District No. 12. I have come here primarily to speak on Bill 6519 which is the revision of laws concerning the establishment and operation of regional school districts.

Having seen what regionalization has done in the past year and a half for our educational system and what it proposes to do in the future, I am an ardent proponent of K-12 regionalization. The larger district (we now have 1,200 pupils) has enabled us to get top-quality administrators who see in the small town not the backwater of educational programs but the opportunity for significant progress.

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What can be done to encourage more small towns to regionalize on a K-12 basis? Because it seems as though most of our Connecticut towns are very jealous of their local control of education and do not easily or lightly give up entirely their local school boards. There is little question but that the "carrot" of additional state aid helps. But I believe that you as legislators must think through very carefully what you intended when you held out that "carrot." Did you intend these regionalization grants for the very small towns such as mine, or are larger towns (in which increased size of the school system will produce no educational improvement) going to be allowed to regionalize merely for the extra aid?

There are in Connecticut approximately sixty towns with fewer than 1,000 children in the local schools, and there are another forty-seven towns with from 1,000 to 3,000 children. I believe that it should be these towns which are helped and encouraged to regionalize on a K-12 basis. If you allow towns with school populations of up to 10,000 children to regionalize with the same monetary aids as the smaller towns, you appear to negate what you were originally trying to do; after all, there are only fifteen towns or cities in Connecticut with school populations of over 10,000 children.

I would like to suggest that any aids to K-12 regionalized districts be on a sliding scale, so that the smaller towns (with the smaller property tax base) get more aid and the larger towns less aid. I think that any K-12 district should have at least 1,000 students. A district then, with from 1,000 to 2,500 or 3,000 students, would get 25 percent additional ADM grant and 80 percent building grant aid; a district of 2,500 or 3,000 students to 5,000 students would get 10 percent additional ADM grant and 65 percent building grant; and towns with more than 5,000 students could regionalize but would receive no additional state aid for doing so.

I believe that at times regionalization can get out of hand. Two neighboring towns have a temporary regional school study committee and the larger of these two towns is expecting more than six hundred children in its first grade class next year; whereas, the smaller town has approximately half that number - three hundred children - in its entire school system. I am not sure that regionalization is the answer for towns of such divergent size and growth rates. I believe that regionalization will work best where the towns involved are of reasonably similar size, make-up and growth. Thank you.

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Eleanor Geiser, Member and Legislative Representative of the Glastonbury Public Schools in Glastonbury. I have been directed to speak in behalf of House Bill 6481 and also 6497.

The Glastonbury Board of Education recognizes there are needs in public education which can be best provided for through cooperative centers. We are presently utilizing such a facility in such a center by participating in METRO with a very happy experience.

The role and function of area educational service centers have been successfully demonstrated in other states, as you heard from previous speakers. We feel Connecticut is ready for this legislation and we urge your favorable action regarding area educational service centers. Thank you.

Chairman Blake: Are there other speakers whom I have not called?
Dr. Kornbluth.

Dr. Kornbluth: I have made a statement but may I just add to that. This will be asking a question of this Committee rather than you ask me. We are in a very serious bind on needing this legislation that are not money bills that are mentioned in my prepared statement - legislation that Mr. Mondani and others have proposed. We've had our hearing with your finance committee of this legislative group and we're wondering what is the next step that can be done to get these bills passed well in advance of this April 4th date, which is our referendum date - because unless it is done, we can not go ahead with our referendum. We're just wondering what can be done to get these bills out on the floor, if that's the expression.

Representative Mondani: The bills were heard and transferred, actually referred, to the Finance Committee. It is my understanding that they are going to have a meeting on these shortly.

Chairman Blake: That clarifies the bonding problem. It wasn't clear in the law. We will try to rule that very large group, which is the legislature. We will try to get it out early.

Dr. Kornbluth: Thank you very much.

Chairman Blake: Is there anyone else who wishes to speak?

Dr. W. Raymond James, Essex: I have several things to talk about. The first one is in connection with 6519 on regionalization. We have not included in our CABE

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report any of the discussions about financial aid and incentives for regional districts. The CABE has not yet established a definite policy about financial incentives in this and similar programs. I would like to drop my roll as committee member and make some remarks of my own along these lines, based on 21 years in a small town, as well as 12 years as a member of Regional School District No. 4 Board of Education, and 5 years as Chairman.

If you will think back on the history of education in Connecticut, you will realize that practically none of the motivation for public education has come from small school districts. Elementary education was usually only provided when required by the State. High school education was rarely provided until required by the State. Small district education has consisted of a second-rate program geared to a conservative view of the needs of the ruling class of middle and high income property owners with above average ability and social background. Small districts have ignored the educational needs of the mentally, physically, and socially handicapped. Even the program for the average and superior student has usually left them a year or so behind students from large districts on entering college. Experience in our district has clearly indicated that the problem of second-class education for urban children (for rural children) (I made a mistake) is perpetuated by the same type of prejudice, ignorance and misconceptions that have perpetuated second class segregated schools. It is impossible to believe that small districts will, of their own accord, either spend the money or approve the changes necessary to provide rural children with the quality of education demanded by our times. It is imperative that the State should assume responsibility, which small districts cannot and will not assume of establishing an adequate educational program for rural children.

Experience in our district, as well as all over the United States, seems to indicate that regionalization is the most practical way of developing these better rural educational programs without serious increases in cost.

Regionalization can be hastened by either edict or by provision of adequate financial incentives. The former would require the development of a state-wide plan, presumably by the State Department of Education, with reorganization of boards of education and transfers of property according to plans developed by the legislature. The problem of coercion is the major objection to this

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system and would undoubtedly result in much conflict for some time. If the alternative method of financial incentives is to work, the incentives will have to be much more significant than those now offered. In order to prevent haphazard districts, more state control may be necessary, even in this method. As far as the effectiveness of financial incentives, it should be pointed out that present districts were all formed as a result of the need of a new high school.

Although the ball for regionalization is usually carried by the idealist, the success of regionalizational referendums has depended on the considerable financial advantage in building one high school instead of three or four. I believe ours is the only district to employ a common superintendent for both the elementary and high schools and to operate cooperative programs through a supervisory district. We are probably the only one to try to convert from 7 to 12 to K to 12. In spite of the 10% added ADM and increased building grants available, plus the well established educational and administrative advantages to be gained, our referendum went down to resounding defeat. It will take a very sizeable financial incentive to overcome the local prejudices, misconceptions, fears, and ignorance that have characterized most of the campaigns against regionalization.

Perhaps the 10% additional ADM influenced the last four districts formed, but it is not a sufficient incentive to cause many, if any, existing K to 12 districts to change. To be significant in entrenched districts or to encourage new districts (which do not have the incentive of a new high school) this figure should be at least 50%. This still amounts to only 45% state aid and, I believe, it is still below national average. There are only four K to 12 districts eligible at present and the mechanism of change is so time consuming that it will be years before this might become an expensive item. Perhaps instead of a percentage, the ADM could be set at 45% of the state average and over the years state grants will gradually catch up.

To summarize:

1. Children in small school districts are not offered an adequate educational program.
2. Regionalization offers a means of improving this program within our present educational structure.
3. The State must assume a much stronger role in promoting regionalization.