

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Seventy-Fourth Session
March 5, 2007**

The Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Bonnie Parnell at 3:49 p.m., on Monday, March 5, 2007, in Room 3142 of the Legislative Building, 401 South Carson Street, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to Room 4406 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. Copies of the minutes, including the Agenda ([Exhibit A](#)), the Attendance Roster ([Exhibit B](#)), and other substantive exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau and on the Nevada Legislature's website at www.leg.state.nv.us/74th/committees/. In addition, copies of the audio record may be purchased through the Legislative Counsel Bureau's Publications Office (email: publications@lcb.state.nv.us; telephone: 775-684-6835).

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell, Chair
Assemblywoman Debbie Smith, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Bob Beers
Assemblyman David Bobzien
Assemblyman Mo Denis
Assemblyman Joseph P. (Joe) Hardy
Assemblyman Ruben Kihuen
Assemblyman Garn Mabey
Assemblyman Harvey J. Munford
Assemblyman Tick Segerblom
Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kristin Roberts, Committee Counsel
Carol M. Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst
Denise Dunning, Committee Secretary
Rachel Pilliod, Committee Manager
Kelly Troescher, Committee Secretary



OTHERS PRESENT:

Dotty Merrill, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards
Sheila Moulton, President, Nevada Association of School Boards
Anne Loring, Representing Washoe County School District
Mary Jo Malloy, Vice Chair, Nevadans for Quality Education
Lonnie Shields, Assistant Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Administrators, Clark County Association of School Administrators and Professional Employees
Cindy Kirkland, Major General, Adjutant General for Nevada; Commander, Nevada National Guard
Mark Prizina, Sergeant Major, Enlisted Association, Nevada National Guard
Stan Jones, Board Member, Nevada Office of Veterans' Services
Jane Nichols, Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education

Chair Parnell:

[Meeting called to order at 3:49 p.m. Roll called.] We have a quorum. Our first order of business this afternoon is a Bill Draft Request (BDR) introduction. It is BDR 34-580 from the Department of Education (NDE). It revises provisions governing private, elementary, and secondary educational institutions. Your vote to introduce does not commit you to any future support of the bill.

BDR 34-580—Revises provisions governing private elementary and secondary educational institutions. (Later introduced as [Assembly Bill 250](#).)

ASSEMBLYMAN BEERS MOVED TO INTRODUCE BDR 34-580 FOR COMMITTEE INTRODUCTION.

ASSEMBLYMAN DENIS SECONDED THE MOTION.

MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY.

Our first hearing for the day is on [Assembly Bill 70](#).

[Assembly Bill 70](#): Revises provisions governing the compensation of the members and certain officers of the boards of trustees of school districts. (BDR 34-878)

Welcome Assemblyman Segerblom to the table to present the bill.

Assemblyman Tick Segerblom, Assembly District No. 9:

Assembly Bill 70 is intended to increase the salaries for school board members throughout the State of Nevada. This is a need that has gone unmet. In support of it, I wanted to show you some statistics that I have obtained from around the country and around the State to dramatize how poorly the school board trustees are currently paid ([Exhibit C](#)). This bill is primarily designed for the two largest counties: Washoe and Clark. I apologize to Washoe County because my statistics really relate to Clark County, as they were the easiest to obtain. The same principle applies to Washoe County.

I went around the country and looked at what school board members are paid in other comparable districts. Los Angeles, which is about twice as large as Clark County, currently receives about \$2,000 per month, but in Chicago or New York, their pay is approximately what we get in Clark County. However, board members are appointed by the mayors in those cities; they are not elected. In the State of Nevada, the trustees are elected, and their duties are comparable to county commissioners, city council, or mayors. If you look at the comparable districts, which, in my opinion, are in Dade and Brower Counties in Florida, the school board members make \$40,000 and \$42,000 respectively. In Clark County, school board members make up to about \$500. In Hawaii, where board members are also appointed, they make about \$100 a day. In Hillsborough County, Florida, they make about \$40,000 per year. The counties in Florida are comparable to Clark County as far as growth rate, have fewer students, and make substantially more than we do in Nevada.

If you compare the Clark County School District trustees with elected officials in other government entities in Clark County, you can see there is a vast inequity. For example, as of last month Clark County School District had 37,000 employees. Their budget is \$2 billion per year, the second largest single budget in the State of Nevada. Clark County has a budget of \$1 billion, or a total of \$6 billion including the airport; the City of Las Vegas has \$500 million; the City of Henderson has \$200 million; and Boulder City has \$21 million. As you can see, Clark County School District has the largest budget.

When you compare what elected officials from these entities make, Clark County commissioners make a minimum of \$68,000 and go up to \$82,000 with longevity. Again, school board trustees in Clark County make \$5,000 and Clark County commissioners make \$68,000, a vast disparity. Boulder City is a small town, and council members make \$11,000 per year. In Henderson, they make \$41,000. Members of the Las Vegas City Council make \$55,000, and those in North Las Vegas make \$40,000. All these entities are substantially less as far as budget, amount of employees, and responsibilities of

the school board trustees. Yet all elected officials in Clark County make much more than they do.

This is the formula that shows how many students are in each of the 17 counties and how many school board members are elected in each county. The formula for paying trustees is the same in Clark County, which has 300,000 students, as it is in Carson City, which has 8,000 students. There is a vast inequity between the responsibilities, in my opinion, of a Clark County school board trustee versus a Carson City school board trustee. The school board members in Clark County and the other 10 large counties make about \$6,000 per year. In the 6 smallest districts, which have less than 1,000 students each, the school board members get about \$2,000 per year. In Clark County and Washoe County they are vastly underpaid relative to the responsibilities.

Here is the example of what employees in Clark County School District are paid versus the \$5,000 that the school board trustees are paid. A custodian's starting pay is \$22,000; school police make \$36,000; teachers only make \$33,000; principals start at \$66,000; and our superintendent makes \$290,000. You have a situation where the school board trustees, who are elected by the people and supervise the school district, only make \$5,000 per year, and they supervise someone who makes \$290,000 per year. This is a vast inequity that needs to be rectified.

My bill, A.B. 70, does not require that a school board increase its salary; it merely indicates that the school board has the authority to raise its salary to \$2,000 per month. This would be approximately the same salary as a custodian in Clark County and other counties. This is still not a huge amount of money, but it is enough that it tells the school board trustees that we, the State Legislature, thinks what they do is important. When they spend 40 hours per week in meetings or on the telephone talking to parents and dealing with students, it is a full-time job, or even two full-time jobs, and \$2,000 per month is a pittance.

In summary, I would ask this Committee, and hopefully this Legislature, to look at the job we are asking these individuals to do and to try to compensate them in some small way commensurate with the duties they perform. In my opinion, you get what you pay for. If you only acknowledge them with a minimal amount of money, we are not telling them that we think what they do is important. For the last four weeks, we have heard that education is the number one concern we have in the State Legislature. We have to spend all our time focusing on education. There are many proposals about education. We need to

start at the top and reward the people who do the work and supervise this huge institution with something that is close to being fair.

Chair Parnell:

That was very enlightening. I did not realize what some of the school board members across the country are making. That is amazing. At another time, I would like to talk about the inequity of the starting salaries of some of the school police and teachers.

Assemblyman Mabey:

If I am not mistaken, we heard a similar bill last session by Assemblyman McCleary. It must have passed on in the Ways and Means Committee.

Assemblyman Segerblom:

This is that bill that you had marked up and passed. I am sure it went to Ways and Means, but it actually passed out of the State Assembly. It died in the Education Committee in the Senate at the very end.

Assemblyman Mabey:

Let us say the trustees used \$2,000 per month. How would those funds come from somewhere not available now?

Assemblyman Segerblom:

This bill does not provide a separate funding source, so in Clark County it would come out of the \$2 billion that they currently spend.

Assemblywoman Smith:

I appreciate this bill, and I think you are absolutely right. It is like every other discussion we have—are we going to put our resources where we value? It is appalling that out of all the elected officials in this State, these people are out doing their job, and we do not see fit to pay them any better than we do. It is crazy. Hopefully we will do something about it in this session. I have already spoken to the sponsor that it is my preference that we do something more forceful and tell them this is what it will be. I am worried that the school trustees will be hesitant to give themselves a raise, just as we fall into that trap. I would like to be able to work on that if you are inclined to do anything. The other issue if it stays with this language is, have you thought about language stating that raises would not go into effect until after the current people who vote are out of office? That is a pretty typical way of giving raises because they technically are not voting themselves a raise. I did not know if there had been any consideration for that if it stays in the same format.

Assemblyman Segerblom:

With respect to your first issue, I personally have no problem with making it mandatory. There will be an amendment presented where the school board members from around the State have asked that we do not do that. I agree that it is crazy to give them this kind of authority and then ask them to give themselves a raise. Everyone is going to say it is political suicide. I do not think it is. That is something that could be discussed. I would not mind providing a special funding source from us to say that this is important when we are giving out billions of dollars.

With respect to the second issue, my only concern would be because they are four-year, staggered terms, I would hate to see someone making \$24,000 and someone else making \$5,000. I do not know how you would do that.

Assemblywoman Smith:

Maybe we can have staff look at that if we ever get to that point. I think they use such language in other places and with other legislation. Changing the language is something I wanted to throw out there. I worry about how the current trustees would view the ability to give themselves a raise.

Assemblyman Segerblom:

I have pledged to them that if we could ask for raises that I, and hopefully others, would take a presentation like this to the newspapers, media, and voters, and explain that we are not giving these people a huge amount of money. When you are asking people to supervise a billion dollar operation, you need to be able to pay them enough money so they can devote the time. In Clark County, each trustee is responsible for 60,000 students. They get calls from parents night and day, and they have meetings all the time; it is more than a full-time job.

Assemblyman Stewart:

I congratulate my colleague from southern Nevada on the excellent job he has done in preparing this bill. I met with one of these dedicated school board members this morning. I would very much support this. I think they are the only people in the State who make less than the State Legislature does. I think we need to do something to rectify that.

Assemblyman Beers:

I agree with my neighbor in the south—excellent job, Mr. Segerblom. I find it interesting that even with this raise these people would be making less than the average custodian in the school. Speaking of the money, if all the members got it, what would the yearly impact on the State be?

Assemblyman Segerblom:

It is \$24,000 times seven. With benefits, I figure about \$200,000, which again is not much when the boss is making \$290,000 and the budget is \$2 billion. Remember, the fact is that they are building \$10 to \$20 million schools. They are hiring contractors. This is the oversight job of these people. If no one has oversight on who is being hired to do these jobs, to contract these things, to buy the land, then things could happen that we do not know about.

Assemblyman Hardy:

I am looking at the word "entitled" in line 7, page 2—it changed from "may receive" on line 4 that has been crossed out. There is something about that word that I have problems with. That being said, with the discrepancies that you described between school districts, I do not know that changing the salary will actually address the discrepancy as much as the reality that Clark County School District is bigger, no matter how you figure and on whatever percentage. If the boards decide to give themselves a raise to \$2,000, and the media does the numbers on your proposal, it is closer to a 1,200 percent increase.

Assemblyman Segerblom:

Right now, they can get \$500 per month. This would take them up to \$2,000, which would be a 400 percent increase.

Assemblyman Hardy:

That is dependent upon how many meetings you go to.

Assemblyman Segerblom:

It cannot exceed the \$500. If you went to 100 meetings, it currently would still only be \$480 per month.

Assemblyman Hardy:

Your point is well taken. I have had prior experience dealing with pay raises. If you look at the concept of a part-time job, which is how the public perceives this, it is neither a full-time job nor a part-time job—it is an all-time job. That is what you do. You live, breathe, and eat the school district, no matter how big you are. The smaller the city, the more people you have show up at city council. Just because you are large does not mean that the smaller school district does not have equal access, or even more access, to the school board members. Having bigger numbers does not mean you work any less than you did in the smaller school district. I admire what you are trying to do, and I concur that it is problematic to try to raise your own salary. That is a challenge—"buyer beware," as it were.

Dotty Merrill, Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Boards:

You are having a friendly amendment ([Exhibit D](#)) distributed to you to Assembly Bill 70 that we have been working on with Assemblyman Segerblom. He has agreed to accept our amendment. We are intending to retain the language that currently exists in *Nevada Revised Statutes* (NRS) 386.320 regarding the per-meeting salary for school board members while adding a new section, Section 3, allowing local boards and districts with an enrollment of 1,000 or more the option of enacting a new monthly salary not to exceed \$2,000, should they wish to do so. In other words, rather than striking these sections from the statute, as has been proposed in the original bill, the sections would remain.

Assemblyman Hardy:

This would include the option of insurance, health insurance, gasoline, travel, and other benefits besides salary?

Dotty Merrill:

It is my understanding, based on existing statutes, that mileage is already reimbursable, so mileage is not something that would be addressed. However, other benefits such as those that you have mentioned could be enacted as well.

Assemblywoman Smith:

Did the association talk about doing any kind of a tiered approach, so that the smaller districts could at least get some kind of a raise, or was this a clear mandate? I am very concerned about the people in the smaller districts who are still working hard. Some of them travel hours to get from one school to another, or to go Reno or Las Vegas to attend meetings. In many ways they have a different kind of burden, but it is a big burden as well.

Sheila Moulton, President, Nevada Association of School Boards:

We had our new board orientation training in Reno over Friday and Saturday, March 2 and 3. Friday we had a meeting of the Executive Board of the School Board Association (NSBA) representing nine counties. It was voted unanimously to support this. One of the things we felt was important was the unfunded mandate portion if we have the opportunity to choose to implement an increase, unless it was funded directly by and through the Legislature. A concern that many of the smaller counties have is taking any more out of their budgets, especially when we have eight counties that are losing students and are seeing their overall money decrease. We have, like you mentioned here, the large and the small. Washoe and Clark Counties are very large, and the others are very small. It is not something our Board of Directors and all 17 counties have had an opportunity to address. Individual counties have yet to address it as well. In Clark County, we have not discussed this as a board. When I come

to you and say that we have supported this, it is from our Executive Committee. There is a hesitancy to take on any more money, particularly when we fear that it will be taking funds away from our students. As any of you know who have worked with school board members, we are very dedicated to the work that we do, as you are. You do not get paid much more than we do. We can appreciate that concern. I think of our member from White Pine who said they would not ask for any more because their budget could not afford it. I share your concern.

Assemblywoman Smith:

Do you have a sense of whether these boards would actually vote themselves an increase?

Sheila Moulton:

Because of the open meeting law, which we rigidly adhere to, we have not discussed it. I mentioned it to one other board member in Clark County, and the thought that we have is that it would come in after we had been reelected. I use the word rather strongly, but it could be political suicide. When you talk about 300 percent increases, we know the reaction there. There is also the dedication. Particularly the years I served as board president in Clark County, we worked easily 40 to 50 hours per week. Now as a board member and working in the State Association, I am working, again, 30 to 40 hours per week. Many board members do not have the opportunity to serve because they need a full-time job to support their families or themselves. Some of us are lucky to be school board members as our jobs. I feel there is a great reluctance to bring themselves an increase in salary.

Chair Parnell:

The sponsor of this legislation supports your amendment. That is a friendly amendment.

Assemblyman Segerblom:

That is correct.

Chair Parnell:

Sheila, did you want to talk about what you do as a school board member?

Sheila Moulton:

I appreciate Assemblyman Segerblom's work on this effort. I know that we have never initiated anything. We have been actively engaged in our pursuit of iNVEST. I would like to share with you what a school board member does. We are the link to the community. We represent the constituents, the taxpayers, and the parents. We also work closely with staff. We do a lot of community

linkage. We are liaisons to the Southern Nevada Regional Planning Coalition (SNRPC), to the debt management, to bond oversight, to the A.B. 353 [Assembly Bill No. 353 of the 69th Session] Committee. I was reminded by Mr. Segerblom about the amount of phone calls we receive. I anxiously go in every day and see how many messages I have received. If I have below eight or ten, I feel lucky. I try to answer those as rapidly as I can. As far as parental involvement, I think we can have a great effect. Every one of the board members that I know of has a Parent Action Committee. They meet with them monthly, or oftentimes more than that, but we really try to engage our parents and encourage them to engage other parents in the activities in education. We are liaisons to different committees in the school district. Right now I am sitting on one to try to provide teacher housing in our community. We have the opportunity to serve there. I have never reached \$5,000 per year. In all actuality, the only meetings that count are the ones where all seven board members are present, which usually runs between three and four, with the exception of when we are doing a superintendent search. Then we might, for a month or two, meet the six meeting maximum. We go to many meetings, but are not necessarily paid for them. Personally, I would like to see the raise occur, but make sure it is funded, perhaps, by the Legislature. Another option would be that we could have the opportunity to vote on it and not have it go into effect. I appreciate that you are even thinking of us. I know the work that you all do is so important, and on behalf of all 107 board members throughout the State, thank you for caring.

Chair Parnell:

I would like to add that I know a few school board members served on the superintendent search outside of your board meeting discussions. That must have taken up a multitude of hours.

Sheila Moulton:

To do a search rigorously, as we did, we had the opportunity to travel the districts to ensure what we were seeing was really reality. A search is very extensive. To be at a public meeting where we watched the superintendent candidates interact with our public and with our staff was all important. It was a trying time. That is why we do not like to do it very often.

Chair Parnell:

I would note that the bill in its original form, and also with the amendment, allows individual school boards to develop a policy, which could reference when the raise became effective.

Anne Loring, Representing Washoe County School District:

Speaking on behalf of the district, we would like to acknowledge the hard work of our trustees and their 100 colleagues around the State. As Sheila Moulton said, it is much more work than simply attending board meetings. With the exception of superintendent searches, I do not think the School Board has ever made it to six meetings a month. They typically run about four meetings per month. The school boards received a raise a number of years ago from \$320 per month for four meetings to \$480. The good news was the members got a raise. The bad news was the members had to meet two or three times more per month to get it. However, the work entails not just the board meetings—it is preparation for the meetings, meetings with constituents, phone calls, subcommittee meetings, which are not covered through pay raises or reimbursement, meetings where board members serve as liaisons to other community meetings, and functions. It is very similar to a legislator's situation. It is a 24-hour per day, seven days per week, 365 days per year kind of job. We appreciate Assemblyman Segerblom's recognition of the hard work that school trustees do. Having said that, on behalf of the Washoe County School District, our Board of Trustees has reviewed the amendment that NSBA has proposed and voted their support on. We wanted to indicate that to you also. We truly appreciate, especially coming from elected officials who also put in an enormous amount of time not at all commensurate with what you are paid, that you are acknowledging the same is true of your colleagues as school board members.

Assemblyman Hardy:

I am looking at the amendment and the alternative that the school trustees could do. If we were looking at the concept of insurance and grouping people into an insurance policy, which would de facto be involved with some recompense for what they do, is there a savings that would not impinge on the budget of the school district directly but that could be indirectly accessed?

Anne Loring:

Even a benefit has an impact on the district in terms of a financial cost, but it is worth considering as well.

Assemblyman Hardy:

I am thinking outside of the box right now.

Chair Parnell:

I think we are all trying to do that. I was trying to figure out a per-pupil ratio per board member pay.

Assemblyman Hardy:

What if I were to ask, for example, what perk a volunteer faculty member of a college receives? What if I got a free parking space, options to check out books from the library, training, a tuition waiver, or options to improve myself and, thus, the district by doing trips? There could also be a number four to your amendment, allowing any grant or money to be donated to go to this from somewhere else that is not in any budget yet.

Mary Jo Malloy, Vice Chair, Nevadans for Quality Education:

We wholeheartedly support the concept of the bill. I would like to say that I would never run for school board. The job is grueling and thankless. I admire every one of them for what they do. We like the flexibility of the bill, but we are also concerned about the funding source. It does not amount to much money when you look at education being in the billions across the State. However, it is still money that will be coming out of our per-pupil funding, and we believe that is too low as it is. We support the concept of the bill, but we would like to see some kind of funding that would come along with it.

Lonnie Shields, Assistant Executive Director, Nevada Association of School Administrators, Clark County Association of School Administrators and Professional Employees:

We are in support of this bill with the amendments. I will make you a side bet that if you do not put funding with it, you will be sitting in the same place two years from now.

Chair Parnell:

Is there anyone wishing to speak in opposition to A.B. 70? [There were none.] I will close the hearing on A.B. 70.

Assemblywoman Smith:

Could we request a chart from the NSBA that shows us what each district has spent in the last biennium as an example so we can gauge how much of an actual increase this is, rather than the total package?

Assemblyman Hardy:

Since you unofficially reopened the hearing, I think Assemblywoman Smith is right on target. If this were to go to Ways and Means, we would need a number. It would be wise to have an official number that we could work with in the end.

Assemblyman Segerblom:

I would like to thank the Legislative Counsel Bureau (LCB) for their help in getting these numbers and putting them all together.

Assemblyman Hardy:

This does not have a fiscal note on it, but it may be advantageous for us, to keep the bill alive, to exempt it due to the issue of funding.

Chair Parnell:

We will keep that in mind. We will see how long it takes to get the fiscal note. Right now we are in good shape for getting all of that—looking at amendments and still having time to look at the bill. It is already concurrently referred to Ways and Means.

I will, again, close the hearing on A.B. 70 and open the hearing on A.B. 104.

Assembly Bill 104: Provides additional benefits to members of the Nevada National Guard and their dependents under certain circumstances. (BDR 34-835)

Assemblyman Lynn Stewart, Assembly District No. 22:

I am having a booklet passed out ([Exhibit E](#)) on the National Guard. Assembly Bill 104 deals with the National Guard and providing them with some of the same benefits that members of the United States Armed Forces have received for years. In the past, the National Guard has not received the same benefits as members of the United States Armed Forces because, in the view of some people, they did not deserve it, as they did not necessarily serve on active duty. However, that has changed significantly over the last few years, as numbers of them have been called to active service in various parts of the world, particularly in southwest Asia.

I want to call your attention to several things in this booklet. If you turn to page 4, you will see the number of members of the guard: in the range of 3,500. If you look at page 5, you will see the various places in the State of Nevada where the Guard is involved and the different types of units that are involved. I was amazed when I first saw this booklet at how extensively the Nevada National Guard and Nevada Air National Guard have been deployed to the hotspots throughout southwest Asia, and if you look at page 7, you can take a look at the various units and their deployment not only in Iraq and Afghanistan, but also in Pakistan, Turkistan, and other places. I thought that was very impressive. On page 9 you will see pictures of the Guard in front of their aircraft and the Chinook helicopter as they are transporting and conducting operations. On page 42, you will see some of the actual involvement that the Guard has throughout the world. Page 43 shows the armories throughout the State of Nevada. On page 44, you will see the three members of the Guard who have paid the ultimate price in defense of our country. Their families are

part of the beneficiaries of this bill. I hope you will take time to look over the booklet a little more extensively, as I have just hit some highlights.

There are two parts to the bill. The first provides tuition and fees to Nevada institutions for the dependents of members of the Nevada National Guard who have been killed while serving as Guard members. The second part provides a \$100 stipend when the guardsman returns to the United States to Nevada after having served abroad. They are given a reintegration hearing and some counseling to integrate them back into the civilian society. This \$100 is not much, but it could possibly provide transportation and a little incentive, as well as a show of appreciation from a grateful State for what they have done.

With that, I would like to introduce two people who are going to speak on this bill: Sergeant Major Prizina and General Kirkland. General Kirkland is the commanding officer of the Nevada National guard.

Cindy Kirkland, Major General, Adjutant General for Nevada; Commander, Nevada National Guard:

I would like to begin by telling you about the young men and women who have a tremendous passion for what they do: not just serving the State, but serving the nation. They do so as volunteers. They willingly put their lives on the line every day that we call them to duty. I support anything we can do that sends the message to them how much we appreciate their service and sacrifice. Although the numbers are not great, individuals who have given their lives for this nation and for this State deserve the recognition and the support of the people of this community in any way possible. This education waiver program will do much for families who have been left behind. It will provide a means for surviving spouses to be able to better their education and make themselves more employable, which makes them able to support their families in the absence of their loved one. The member would have been there for the children as well, if not for their sacrifice, to provide for their education in the future. It is not currently available to them. If we could support that, it would be a tremendous benefit, not just for those members and their families, but for the State as well.

On the integration piece, one of the challenges that is also being addressed at the national level is the fact that we have been deploying unprecedented numbers of members of the National Guard. They are deploying for extended periods of time into an environment that, as you can well imagine, is incredibly challenging. It puts them in a position of facing situations that they have never faced before. It is extremely difficult both emotionally and professionally for them when they are so focused in a combat environment, and then after a year of conflict, the deployment ends. They come home and are immediately

reintroduced into their community. They are back to their family and back to their employers. As you can imagine, after being gone for a year, all they want to do is get back to life as normal. Unfortunately, for many of them, life is never normal again. When they make the decision to leave the Guard or active duty without identifying potential emotional problems, they walk away from the ability of the federal government to provide them a means of addressing those problems in the future. They can come back and go through the process of applying for benefits, disabilities, and such, but it is a very lengthy process. By providing a small stipend, this bill would allow us to get them immediately into programs that would help them address those kinds of concerns without having to delay going through these other processes. If there is anything we can do to support that kind of assistance for our soldiers and airmen, it certainly is appreciated.

Chair Parnell:

Where would they take the course on reintegration?

Cindy Kirkland:

There are counseling courses that are offered through different organizations and private companies. It is not necessarily a course in itself. Much of it is providing them with immediate services for counseling. We can send them to local community providers who can give them the kind of assistance they need to deal with the emotional aspects of coming from this exciting, wild environment of combat back into a normal life in society. It is not necessarily an extended course. They are all private providers.

Chair Parnell:

That leads me to my second question. It does not seem like \$100 would come close to serving what is needed. When you consider what a psychologist is making by the hour, the \$100 will probably not even get them a one-hour appointment. I do not know what we could do about that. I am sure my colleagues share the same concern that it seems so paltry.

Cindy Kirkland:

I think that Sergeant Prizina has more information on the programs that are available. The stipend the State would be providing would help to offset some of the personal expenses and costs related to attending the programs that the federal programs at this time are not able to provide. They are addressing that at the national level and are trying to fix it, but the reserve components as a whole, the soldiers and airmen, are the ones who are suffering. They need the assistance right away.

Chair Parnell:

If you watch the news shows at all, they highlight how we were unprepared to deal with all the men and women coming back from Iraq. When you consider how many National Guardsmen have been involved in this conflict, I am sure it makes matters extremely complex. We would probably want to do as much as we possibly can to help ease the transition.

Assemblyman Beers:

Mr. Stewart, this is a marvelous bill. I have long thought that if we were going to treat our Guardsmen and Guardswomen like active military, they deserve every single benefit that is given to that type of service.

Mark Prizina, Sergeant Major, Enlisted Association, Nevada National Guard:

I have been elected for two years. I was born and raised here. I have been in the Guard for about 18 years. This is an organization that takes care of the soldiers, airmen, and families who have made the ultimate sacrifice. With that being said, what we are discussing today is historic for the people who wear a uniform and know there are people like you that will take care of our families when the maximum sacrifice is given. There are many good insurance policies that we carry with us when we depart, but if I had the extra sense of security in knowing that my three children and wife would be taken care of that much more, I would stand behind it. I would like to thank you for representing us.

Chair Parnell:

Mr. Stewart, would you like to reference your amendment so everyone knows?

Assemblyman Stewart:

The amendment ([Exhibit F](#)) puts a time limit on it. The wife of the deceased National Guard member would have to complete or take advantage of the education benefits within a ten-year period from the time of the death of the spouse. The children would have ten years from their 18th birthday to take advantage of it. It would not be an open-ended offer.

Mark Prizina:

I want to refer back to the \$100 stipend. Many of the members in military status are directed to return to the armories for counseling. That \$100 will offset the spouse cost—driving, flying, hotel—to attend the counseling with the member. This is one thing that the Army is really pressing. They are trying to get families involved with the post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

Chair Parnell:

I still do not think it is enough. We will probably want to discuss the bill before we act on it to see if there is an interest to increase that figure.

Assemblyman Stewart:

We would be agreeable to that. I thank you for your consideration. I would like to have the gentlemen in the back who are veterans to stand and be acknowledged. We appreciate their attendance here and their service.

Chair Parnell:

Thank you. We look forward to seeing you again as it goes through the process.

Assemblyman Hardy:

On page 2 of the mock-up of the amendment, if the child is eligible for ten years after he attains age 18, does that imply the student cannot start college sooner than that? Is that what it means to take advantage of the scholarship tuition waiver?

Assemblyman Stewart:

Maybe Legal could help us on that. If they took advantage of it before 18, they would still have ten years to use the funding.

Chair Parnell:

Legal staff has indicated that it will be clarified. We realize there are 17-year-olds who are graduating.

Stan Jones, Board Member, Nevada Office of Veterans Services:

Tim Tetz is in Washington, D.C., this week and asked me to speak on behalf of all veterans and the Veterans Service Commission (NOVS). We are in support of this bill, and encourage your participation in it. It is really nothing new. The bill exists for other armed forces entities. We are asking to be added on. We are not talking about a large number of men and women. Hopefully we will not have any more casualties, but we have to accept the fact that there may be.

As a side note, our State Legislature has been tremendous over the years. I am a 31-year veteran. I served 25 years in the National Guard and six years active duty. Often times, Nevada has been the forerunner in many issues that help veterans and guardsmen. I think General Kirkland would agree with me that we are now experiencing some things we have never experienced before with the number of people who are participating in these conflicts around the world. I do not think we have seen the tip of the iceberg yet on the issue in the second half of the bill. I think the big problem is going to be down the road when these people have been back for a time. I concur with you, Madam Chair, that \$100 is not enough, although what the Sergeant said is encouraging. It will allow the spouse to attend the counseling sessions. I would suggest you consider \$250 or more as a minimum amount.

Chair Parnell:

One of the things we all have to recognize is the National Guard is now being asked to do everything that active military is being asked to do, and in some cases even more with the border issue. You have every right to stand up and ask for what you need. Do not hesitate.

Jane Nichols, Vice Chancellor, Academic and Student Affairs, Nevada System of Higher Education:

I wanted to be here today to support this bill and to tell you how wonderful it has been to work with Nevada's National Guard in implementing the policy that was originally passed in the 2003 Legislative Session. That policy offered these same benefits to active National Guard and active National Guard recruits. We assure you that the implementation of this will be as the other benefits have been. We would hope that these additional benefits will be extended. We are pleased to see the timeline added as an amendment because we have found that the timeline encourages the spouse and the dependents to go to school and to take advantage of the benefit. We have some sense of the benefits now. We believe the additional cost of this will be very small, as you have already indicated. I want to be sure you know that our work with the National Guard has been a pleasure. It has been a joy to be able to offer these benefits to the students. We work very closely with them. As often happens, the National Guard members are called to active duty in the middle of a semester. That call is no respecter of our semester timeline. We have special policies in place on our campuses to allow them to work with professors to withdraw or make up work so the student does not lose their grade point average and is not disadvantaged. We try to make sure they can be reintegrated when they return. I am here to say yes and to thank you for your consideration of this bill.

Chair Parnell:

Are there additional comments on A.B. 104? [There were none.] Do you have final comments, Assemblyman Stewart?

Assemblyman Stewart:

I would like to thank you and the members of the Committee for your consideration and for the questions and support you have rendered here. For those who have testified, I appreciate each of the contributions they have made.

Chair Parnell:

This is a great issue. Seeing no additional comment, I will close the hearing on A.B. 104.

Are there any comments from the public? [There were none.]

I have a few notices for the remainder of this week and next week. We will not be having a meeting this coming Wednesday, March 7; however, we do have a meeting at 5:00 p.m. in the Assembly Chambers. Next Monday, March 12, we have a room change, so please make note that next Monday's meeting will be held in room 1214 starting at the regular time. We will be taking up Assembly Bill 157, the issue of full-day kindergarten. We expect that to be a rather lengthy meeting and a large crowd.

If there is no additional business before the Committee, the Assembly Committee on Education will stand in adjournment at 4:57 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Denise Dunning
Recording Secretary

Kelly Troescher
Transcribing Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell, Chair

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Education

Date: March 5, 2007

Time of Meeting: 3:45 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A	Committee on Education	Agenda
	B	Committee on Education	Attendance Roster
<u>A.B. 70</u>	C	Assemblyman Tick Segerblom	PowerPoint presentation
<u>A.B. 70</u>	D	Dotty Merrill, Nevada Association of School Boards	Friendly Amendment to <u>A.B. 70</u>
<u>A.B. 104</u>	E	Assemblyman Lynn Stewart	Nevada National Guard Biennial Report
<u>A.B. 104</u>	F	Assemblyman Lynn Stewart	Mock-up of Proposed Amendment to <u>A.B. 104</u>