

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF THE
SENATE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND THE ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Seventy-sixth Session
March 9, 2011**

The joint meeting of the Senate Committee on Education and the Assembly Committee on Education was called to order by Chair Mo Denis at 3:42 p.m. on Wednesday, March 9, 2011, in Room 1214 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada. The meeting was videoconferenced to the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, Room 4412, 555 East Washington Avenue, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. [Exhibit B](#) is the Attendance Roster. All exhibits are available and on file in the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

SENATE COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Moises (Mo) Denis, Chair
Senator Ruben J. Kihuen, Vice Chair
Senator Valerie Wiener
Senator Sheila Leslie
Senator Barbara K. Cegavske
Senator Don Gustavson
Senator Greg Brower

ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Assemblyman David P. Bobzien, Chair
Assemblywoman Marilyn Dondero Loop, Vice Chair
Assemblyman Paul Aizley
Assemblyman Elliot T. Anderson
Assemblywoman Olivia Diaz
Assemblywoman Lucy Flores
Assemblyman Ira Hansen
Assemblyman Randy Kirner
Assemblywoman April Mastroluca
Assemblyman Richard McArthur
Assemblyman Harvey J. Munford
Assemblywoman Dina Neal
Assemblyman Lynn D. Stewart
Assemblywoman Melissa Woodbury

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STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Pepper Sturm, Policy Analyst
Mindy Martini, Policy Analyst
Sandra Small, Committee Secretary

OTHERS PRESENT:

Bernie Anderson, Ex-Assemblyman
Dwight D. Jones, Superintendent, Clark County School District
Heath Morrison, Ph.D., Superintendent, Washoe County School District
William E. Roberts, Ed.D., Superintendent, Nye County School District
Chris Miller, President, Nevada Association of School Boards

CHAIR BOBZIEN:

Read Across America is an annual reading motivation and awareness program which encourages children nationwide to celebrate reading. The celebration is held March 2, the birthday of children's author Dr. Seuss.

BERNIE ANDERSON (Ex-Assemblyman):

I am happy to participate in Reading Awareness Month and to read to you *The Cat in the Hat*. I wish the Legislature's problems could be as quickly solved as understanding a Dr. Seuss book. We all need some hope for education.

CHAIR BOBZIEN:

The Assembly would like to present Craig Stevens with a proclamation ([Exhibit C](#)) honoring Read Across America.

CHAIR DENIS:

Today's agenda includes presentations by two of Nevada's largest school districts and a rural school district. The Legislature enacts education laws and the schools' boards of trustees adopt specific policies and procedures. The school district superintendents must carry out all these requirements while managing difficult budget and personnel issues. Some of the proposed education reform bills came about as part of the State's application for Race to the Top funds.

DWIGHT D. JONES (Superintendent, Clark County School District):

I have been with the Clark County School District (CCSD) for 2.5 months. While serving as the commissioner of education in Colorado, I worked in a bipartisan way with the Colorado legislature, governor, public and many educators to move a number of reforms designed to get better results in our schools. The Committee has received the paper I wrote outlining some of the Colorado reforms, "A Few Lessons Learned" ([Exhibit D](#)). The CCSD and Nevada may be able to implement some of those reforms which were of concern in Colorado and may be of concern to people in Nevada. My handout, [Exhibit D](#), will help people see how the reforms are necessary to achieve better results and create great schools for all students.

The CCSD has provided a copy of "Education Reform in the Clark County School District" ([Exhibit E](#)) which includes district statistics related to enrollment, demographics and school dropouts, pages 2 through 6. The CCSD has experienced a substantial increase in enrollment creating both challenges and opportunities. The CCSD will be aggressive in addressing those challenges. One of the challenges I and the educators in Clark County face is a culture which does not include valuing education. The CCSD must improve the system's ability to get better. The employees in the CCSD are going to be held to a higher standard and a higher level of results; that includes the superintendent. A conceptual frame is in place showing how we will think about the work ahead, [Exhibit E](#), pages 7 through 12. Data must be developed which is easy to understand, is consistent, is transparent and has integrity. Right now, Clark County does not trust the available data. When reliable data is available and trusted by the community, my job will be harder because the CCSD will be held accountable for the results. The entire State is embracing this concept. I am partnering with the other superintendents in Nevada to implement this by September 2011.

The CCSD needs to decentralize, including moving resources out of my office, page 13, [Exhibit E](#). We need to determine what resources are currently being used. We need to invest in our teachers and leaders; make sure we are hiring the best and the brightest; support those who need it; and find a way out for those who should not be in the classroom. Innovation is needed. The CCSD needs accountability along with support. Principals have a high level of accountability. They need the resources and autonomy for decision making over personnel as well as over programs, and they need to be accountable. After

12 years of education, students should leave our system ready to do one of two things: enter postsecondary education without remediation or enter the workforce.

We need good evaluation systems based upon growth model data, not a static model. A static model does not take into account the difficult populations in some schools. We need to measure the students' growth and build that information into the accountability system. Where the growth model is used, teachers and administrators find it to be fair. Teachers are not afraid of accountability; they are afraid of an unfair accountability system. Even the higher-achieving students in Nevada are not competing with the higher-achieving students in other states. We need data to measure a years' growth in a years' time. We should help students needing to catch up; maintain proficiency in those students currently proficient; and help those on the upper end to move up. Nevada was one of the first states to adopt Common Core State Standards (CCSS). The CCSS are more rigorous than what we have been using. This creates great teaching challenges. Youngsters can work a lot harder in the classroom than they are currently. If we align to a more rigorous standard and create a matching assessment, we can raise the bar in every classroom. We will have to train and support our teachers, because we are not now teaching at a high enough level. We are not asking questions at a high enough level, and our expectations are too low, especially for "brown" students and low-income students.

Greater choice is important. There should be options for our parents and students. The CCSD had the courage to embrace the empowerment model. Some CCSD Empowerment Schools have achieved better results, and some have not. If we want to empower all of our schools, we need to determine what works and make those changes throughout the system.

There needs to be a true focus on literacy. We need to have benchmarks. We need to benchmark first graders. If those children are not reading at grade level, to be successful, intervention needs to happen immediately. Success is greater at the first-grade level, and the investment is less than intervention at the high school level. There should be another review in the third grade and again in sixth grade. If the child is not reading at or above grade level, intervention must take place immediately. If we are successful in intervening early, we will change the whole system. The scarce resources available must be realigned to the

greatest need, which to me is early intervention. Children who cannot read disengage; they do not want to be embarrassed by their peers.

The CCSD is failing too many youngsters. We will make the hard decisions to design a new system to get better results. I am optimistic. Governor Sandoval's reform package aligns well with other reform packages I have seen. We will need to do the work in a bipartisan way. The Colorado Growth Model was done in "open source." If one state is going to spend the resources, why not do it in "open source" so other states do not have to create the same model and spend the same resources. Fourteen states, including Nevada, have adopted the Colorado Growth Model. We hope to have it up by September. Colorado spent \$4 million; it cost Nevada \$250,000. That Growth Model will change the dynamics of our students, in a transparent way.

The CCSD has pockets of excellence. Pockets of excellence will not work for the CCSD. I have to create great schools for all students. Some schools are beating the odds. The Halle Hewetson Elementary School is one of the oldest schools in Las Vegas with 940 students, kindergarten through fifth grade. It has high poverty, 100 percent free and reduced meals, 87 percent Hispanic and 79 percent English language learners. This school was named the 2009-2010 Exemplary Turn Around School ([Exhibit F](#)). This is the highest academic distinction for Nevada schools.

SENATOR CEGAVSKE:

When speaking of graduation rates, we refer to seniors. In third grade, students mentally drop out, but physically we keep them in school. In eighth grade, we physically lose students. The eighth grade dropout rate is not included in our statistics. I would like the CCSD to review the third and eighth grade information. Does the CCSD plan to keep the model of five associate superintendents?

SUPERINTENDENT JONES:

The dropout rate is an issue. It is the reason we must invest in early childhood education. We know if children cannot read, they mentally drop out. Colorado had good research from Johns Hopkins University for eighth graders which I hope to use in Nevada. We are looking at evaluating sixth graders for intervention indicators. By eighth grade, it is already too late for intervention. I have a timeline to make changes in some operations and functions in my first

three months; within six months, I have asked for a detailed analysis of how resources are spent and the results achieved. As a consequence, you will see a recommendation to the trustees and the community for changes to the CCSD current structure.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN NEAL:

Students will move toward a goal; they have the ability to believe in their success if they are given the tools to attain those goals. In your redesign focus, are you examining textbooks and how they impact literacy? In middle school there are repeat stories. The students stop reading because they have already read the story. The teacher needs to access the imagination of the student.

SUPERINTENDENT JONES:

Yes, we are looking at textbooks. It is clear what we expect of youngsters impacts their performance. Our expectations are not as high as they need to be. It makes a difference when students are reading stories of interest and making a connection. Reading books they have already read is a design and system problem. In the CCSD, there is 35 percent mobility; students transfer to other areas where the same book or stories may have been read last year.

ASSEMBLYMAN ANDERSON:

What do you know about students who do not have textbooks to bring home? If there is a problem, how should it be addressed?

SUPERINTENDENT JONES:

I am not aware of this problem, but will get the information to the Committee.

SENATOR WIENER:

What is the CCSD doing to improve the nutritional value of school meals? What are we doing to get children on federal meal programs? Nevada's participation is not where it could be for the dollars available to feed children. If they are hungry, they cannot learn. Is the CCSD doing anything to create a more active environment for students? Physical activity also improves a child's ability to learn.

SUPERINTENDENT JONES:

I am a supporter of public/private partnerships; it is a great way to aid meal programs. Information has been requested from the CCSD Food Service

Department which I have not yet received. I have received a proposal regarding the breakfast program to increase the number of students the CCSD could feed and be eligible for reimbursement. It will cost the CCSD, but the resources will be found. I am not currently familiar with the physical environment in the CCSD.

ASSEMBLYMAN MUNFORD:

Teachers seem to be blamed for poor performance and achievement by students. What is your plan for providing additional assistance or training for teachers? Do you have ideas so teachers and principals can work better together? How does the CCSD feel about test scores as part of a teacher's evaluation?

SUPERINTENDENT JONES:

We need to be careful that teachers do not take all of the blame. Blame is wasted effort. We need to focus on moving forward and on how to get better results. I believe in investing in teachers because they have the potential for the biggest impact. Better results must happen in the classroom. The CCSD has focused on building and staffing schools. The CCSD has not focused enough on teachers in those schools. The downturn in the economy and the leveling of growth gives us a great opportunity to reflect on CCSD's greatest asset: teachers. We are going to address training and development for teachers. Teachers must grow and improve their practices fast, because there is another group of youngsters moving through the system. Results matter, but I am not holding just the teacher accountable; the CCSD administration must be accountable to support and serve the teachers. I like the fact the Legislature may pass some legislation looking at educator effectiveness and push us to do better evaluations. Results must match the evaluations.

CHAIR BOBZIEN:

What is your initial assessment of Nevada and where it needs to go? What will it take, such as a data system which will serve us for years to come, to implement the Growth Model by September in both the CCSD and in Nevada?

SUPERINTENDENT JONES:

It is too early for me to give you a statewide assessment. I have focused on the CCSD which has 74 percent of Nevada's students. We have met with community members, principals and others across the system. There is not a lot of consistency or standardization. We have demonstrated the Growth Model

internally. There is optimism about a better-aligned and transparent data system. The Halle Hewetson Elementary School was using growth data. They analyzed data, trained their teachers to analyze data and used the information to form instruction. I have internal and external training to do because the community needs to understand how to look at data. We are working on a communication and implementation plan for the CCSD while other superintendents and Dr. Keith Rheault are coming together to determine how to use the Growth Model data throughout the State.

CHAIR BOBZIEN:

The cost, \$250,000, for a statewide enterprise technology project is cost-effective and efficient. We are counting on this data foundation on which to base other decisions.

HEATH MORRISON, PH.D. (Superintendent, Washoe County School District):

The two largest school districts in Nevada, Washoe County School District (WCSD) and CCSD are working as a partnership to bring opportunities to the children in Nevada. The WCSD and CCSD are also working collaboratively with our rural colleagues and the Department of Education on such things as the Growth Model and teacher evaluations.

The WCSD strategic plan is included in "Envision WCSD 2015, Investing in our Future" ([Exhibit G](#), original is on file in the Research Library) and begins on page 7. The WCSD business partners paid for this publication. Nevada faces tremendous economic challenges. We know the challenges in public education. We know there is a national dropout epidemic; 1.2 million children drop out of school annually. Nevada's dropout rate is 24 percent higher than the national average. *Quality Counts 2010* indicates Nevada's children have the least chance for success when compared to other states and the District of Columbia. There are many areas needing improvement. It is hard to find optimism when looking at the numbers. Nevada has a 50 percent high school graduation rate. There are 440,000 students in 17 school districts in Nevada. That means there are 220,000 young Nevadans who may not receive their diplomas if we do not change quickly. Nevada ranks 50th for ninth grade students who will receive a college diploma and in job availability for young people who receive a college diploma. Nevada ranks third for employing high school dropouts. Improving Nevada's economy and education system is symbiotic.

The WCSD is the 56th largest school district in the Nation. I have been to every school in the district talking to principals, support staff and teachers. I have talked to business leaders, faith-based leaders and political leaders to understand what the WCSD is doing well, where there are opportunities for improvement and how to close and eliminate achievement gaps. The WCSD developed a strategic plan, [Exhibit G](#), pages 7 through 39, to meet the needs of every student. "Goal 1" is to ensure academic success for every child, [Exhibit G](#), page 11. Last year the WCSD achieved adequate yearly progress (AYP), the federal definition for success. All of the comprehensive high schools made AYP, and 84 percent of our elementary and middle schools improved in math and reading. Our graduation rate for the past five years, based upon the National Governors Association (NGA) model, was 56 percent. Last year, we improved to 63 percent. We are happy to be improving, but are not happy at 63 percent. The WCSD is increasing its commitment to prekindergarten and full-day kindergarten. We are increasing our commitment to public school choice at the high school level. We are adding academy and signature programs. These will be programs such as business, finance and entrepreneurship; nursing; biomedical; and geothermal. We are tying into higher education. We want to offer businesses coming into Nevada four to eight years of young people being immersed in the industries of tomorrow.

The WCSD's "Goal 2," [Exhibit G](#), page 17, is to improve our human capital systems. We are in the process of revising our hiring practices and our evaluation systems. The WCSD was a recipient of the Teacher Initiative Fund which was used to revise teacher evaluation processes.

"Goal 3" involves communication with our families and the community, [Exhibit G](#), page 23. The WCSD is creating a parent university. With our business partners, we are creating a first of its kind community compact to determine expectations.

"Goal 4" is about having safe and engaging cultures for all of our schools and all of our children, [Exhibit G](#), page 29. We have increased our commitment to positive behavior supports and have committed additional resources to anti-bullying and antiharassment. We are working aggressively to create a culture of respect.

"Goal 5" is WCSD's commitment to performance management, [Exhibit G](#), page 34. All of our offices and departments have key performance indicators. The WCSD is using "Six Sigma" and "Lean Six Sigma" to improve our efficiencies in business operations. The WCSD is in the second year of implementing this business plan. We have a moral obligation to educate every one of our students. Businesses will not come to Nevada unless we improve the standing of public education. The Education Alliance has created a white paper with amazing documentation from many states with a tax-friendly environment and improved public education. Nevada ranks high in terms of being tax friendly, but ranks low in terms of educational attainment. The prime industries in Nevada for many years have not needed a high school or college-educated workforce. Across the country, 70 percent of the jobs will require not only a high school diploma but also some form of postsecondary education. There is a cost savings to educating our children. We spend 15 percent more in Nevada than other states to incarcerate young people. The commonality of young prisoners is that 75 percent do not have a high school diploma. For the class of 2009, if we had educated every child, \$230 million would not have to be spent on medical, health and human services in the future. We would have saved \$26 million in college remediation if they had been educated at higher levels. If we improved the male graduation rate by 5 percent, the State would bring in \$78 million. If we graduated every child in the class of 2009, over the course of their lifetimes, \$5.2 billion would be brought to Nevada.

The WCSD has one of the most aggressive reform agendas in the country. We are seeing some early signs of success; however, there are huge areas needing improvement. Nevada's 17 school districts are going to be part of the solution to the challenges we face.

SENATOR BROWER:

Is the graduation rate in 2012 estimated to be 62 percent, page 9, [Exhibit G](#)?

DR. MORRISON:

That is the NGA model for looking at graduation rates. In 2010, the graduation rate was 63 percent. On March 8, 2011, our board of education adopted an 80 percent graduation rate for 2015.

SENATOR BROWER:

If Washoe County were a state, how would it rate for graduation?

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DR. MORRISON:

I do not have an exact figure. I know we are ahead of most school districts across the country and many states. Currently, Montgomery County, Maryland, has an 85 percent graduation rate using the NGA model. The WCSD will quickly catch up with Montgomery County.

SENATOR BROWER:

Does WCSD have data from the 1970s forward regarding graduation rates? Has the graduation rate been going up or down? Do you have any information regarding the reason for the change in graduation rates?

DR. MORRISON:

The 50 states are using 50 different accountability methods. It is hard to compare without common measures. Within states, school districts use different measures. When children in the WCSD do not show up for school, we go knocking on doors to get them back in the classroom. We have found that just about every family with a child who did not return to school had parents who dropped out of school. The industries driving Nevada's economy provide an economic incentive to drop out of school. A dropout in a service industry could earn more than a starting teacher in Clark County. The demographics in Nevada have changed quickly. Public education has not kept up with those needs. We want to have students come into our schools, diagnose their unique needs and meet those needs. We have been failing too many of our children of color, children with special-education needs and English as a second language students.

SENATOR BROWER:

Do you know if a higher number of students graduated in previous decades?

DR. MORRISON:

In the 1970s, Nevada was ahead of the national graduation rate. That rate has declined. It is difficult to determine because the graduation metrics have been changing. I am encouraged now because all 50 states have committed to the same measure.

SENATOR BROWER:

It appears that more students graduated in the 1980s than graduate today. It is puzzling because we were not putting more money per pupil into education.

What is happening? It was possible in the 1970s to get a good paying job without a high school diploma.

DR. MORRISON:

I am not saying it is all about money. It is about how we use the money. The children served today differ from the children served in the 1970s. It does not mean because we have more students impacted by poverty, transiency and language today that we should expect lower results. It means we need to meet their needs. It means having high but fair expectations. It is about changing our delivery systems, changing our programs and acknowledging the fact the children are different. Nevada ranks last in prekindergarten and full-day kindergarten. Nevada needs to commit to early childhood.

SENATOR BROWER:

Parental involvement, parental support, parental ability to make sure children are ready when they start school and parental expectations for graduation have gone down in the last 30 years. If we invest more in early childhood education, are we not compensating for parents' inability to provide for their children's needs?

DR. MORRISON:

I disagree. I have met few parents who do not want the best for their children. A business meets the needs of its clients. The schools do not meet the needs of its clients. When we send information home in English to non-English speaking parents, we fail the parents. Some parents come from a culture not understanding it is not disrespectful to ask if the school district is doing what is best for their child. It is necessary to change the dynamic which allows budget cuts to schools with the most need. The WCSD is going to prioritize its budget according to our strategic plan. The WCSD will look at the needs of the most vulnerable children and do right by them as resources allow.

SENATOR BROWER:

It makes more sense to ensure the most at-risk schools have the resources such as classroom-reduction resources. We cannot treat every school the same; they are not the same. Over the past 30 years, parents have expected less from their children. It is a parent problem, not a school district problem, when a child drops out of school.

DR. MORRISON:

Parents do the best they can. Two states in the union have created a middle class standard of living for the majority of their citizens without having a primary college-educated workforce: Michigan with the auto industry and Nevada with gaming and construction industries. We need to change this to commit to a better tomorrow for our young people and the State.

ASSEMBLYMAN MUNFORD:

I support Senator Brower. I taught for five decades. It was easier for me to teach students in the 1980s. Students have changed. Social cultures have changed. Children had more respect for adults. Children are now exposed to more. In later years, I had to compete with the students' outside interests. That made it difficult to motivate students to see the value of an education. The families have to play a major role and participate in the child's life. Sometimes the child who needs the most gets the least.

DR. MORRISON:

The schools can only control certain factors. The schools can attempt to meet the needs of parents who want to educate their children. Another major change is poverty. This year, the WCSD committed to making electronic grade books available to all parents. However, almost half of our students live in poverty; how many of those parents can go online to check their child's progress?

ASSEMBLYWOMAN FLORES:

Parents have a crucial role in the success of their children. Some parents do not have the tools or resources to get their children through school. I have personal experience as a dropout. My parents did the best they could. Fortunately, I now have a law degree, and I am serving in the Legislature. Help may be needed for some parents to guide their children through school.

WILLIAM E. ROBERTS, ED.D. (Superintendent, Nye County School District):

The Nye County School District (NCSD), at 18,000 square miles, is the largest geographical school district in the contiguous United States. I am the president of the Nevada Association of School Superintendents (NASS).

The Committee members have received a copy of "iNVEST '11" ([Exhibit H](#)). In 2001, Governor Kenny Guinn told the 17 school superintendents in Nevada to develop a long-range plan to increase student achievement. There are only

four of those superintendents remaining. There have been about 40 superintendents in Nevada during the last 9 years. The "iNVEST '11" was developed by all 17 school superintendents and has a different approach than we have used in the past. There are four requests, [Exhibit H](#).

The first is to hold the line on budget cuts. Budget cuts have been imposed on school districts the last three years. We have cut to the bone. Further reductions will impede our ability to do our job. We are asking the Governor and Legislature to protect and maintain kindergarten through grade 12 education at the 2009 funding level. Only then can we realistically achieve better results. If a funding reduction is made, the local school districts must be given the maximum flexibility in making decisions on how the funding is spent and how education is delivered.

The second request, page 4, [Exhibit H](#), is to empower school districts to focus on education by eliminating consuming resources, reports and regulations. School districts must be relieved of mandates that are inconsistent, incompatible or misaligned with our core business of improving student achievement. Some of the mandates benefit only a few but are treated as mandates for the entire district. We ask the Legislature to examine the multitude of requirements that have been placed in statutes over the last decade and relieve the districts of the compliance burden. A list of those requirements will be provided later in the Session.

The third request is to share responsibility for results and reform, page 5, [Exhibit H](#). Two areas need reform: educator effectiveness and student achievement. We ask the Legislature to revise statutes governing collective bargaining to make it possible for superintendents and school boards to utilize effective business practices and to promote quality and excellence resulting in improved student achievement. Districts need legislative support to reform tenure and to retain the best and brightest teachers during reduction in the workforce and to implement meaningful evaluations which include growth in student achievement.

The superintendents and school boards would like to focus their reform efforts on education through shared responsibility, pages 5 through 7, [Exhibit H](#), in order to make meaningful reform leading to greater student achievement. Greater student achievement is more important than ever as Nevada struggles

to recover economically and to diversify. A sound education system is a key to recovery now and in the future. In every district and in every classroom, we must raise our achievement results. We know today's students cannot succeed in tomorrow's world with yesterday's education. The education leaders in Nevada have pledged, with the help of the Legislature, to implement the meaningful reforms listed, [Exhibit H](#), such as to close or reconstitute failing schools; develop school-choice options and end social promotion.

CHRIS MILLER (President, Nevada Association of School Boards):

I am from Storey County. The Nevada Association of School Boards (NASB) represents all 17 school districts and 107 elected school board trustees. Through local board leadership, NASB supports success for all students. We are dedicated to ensuring all students receive the best education possible to help them become informed, knowledgeable adults. Nevadans share a belief that education is an important key to our economic recovery. In every district and every classroom, we must raise our expectations and results. We can never forget our students are more than numbers. Teachers are our number one resource; students are our number one responsibility. The NASB joins the NASS in their support of "iNVEST '11."

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CHAIR DENIS:

There being no further public comment or business to come before this Committee, we are adjourned at 5:52 p.m.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Sandra Small,
Committee Secretary

APPROVED BY:

Senator Mo Denis, Chair

DATE: _____

Assemblyman David P. Bobzien, Chair

DATE: _____

<u>EXHIBITS</u>			
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