
Bills OK'd to appoint superintendent

BATON ROUGE (AP) — Bills to abolish the elected job of education superintendent and make the post an appointive one cleared the House Education Committee by a narrow margin.

The committee voted 8-7 for the measure by Rep. Alphonse Jackson, D-Shreveport, and then voted 10-5 for an identical Senate bill.

"We'll go with the Senate bill but we wanted to get the House bill out as a courtesy to Alphonse," said Edgar Mouton, chief lobbyist for Gov. Edwin Edwards.

That means the House will take final legislative action on the measure. Action could come as early as next week.

"Some good reasons can be advanced for keeping the post elective but there are better reasons for changing the system," Edwards told the panel.

"What we do with education can reflect on us good or bad for the rest of our lives."

Edwards said the educational system is frozen much of the time at the administrative level because of almost constant conflicts between the elected superintendent and the elected Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

The bill would allow BESE to establish qualifications for the job of appointed superintendent. Then, by a two-thirds vote, BESE would make the appointment. The superintendent would have a four-year contract to run concurrent with the terms of BESE members. The Senate would have to consent before the appointee could take the job.

Opposing the bill were organized labor, teachers and school principals.

"This is the second most important office in the state," said Louisiana AFL-CIO President Vic Bussie. "... let the people decide. If the people make a mistake in a situation, it (the mistake) belongs to the people."

Meanwhile, the Senate Education Committee on Thursday approved several educational reform bills that would end tenure for public school administrators, require a more extensive assessment of new teachers and research merit pay.

Representatives of teacher groups opposed the bills requiring more evaluation of young teachers before they can be issued a professional certificate as well as the establishing of model programs to test merit pay theories.

Principals, administrators

and their representatives told the committee that they were against ending tenure for administrators, although the proposed bill would not affect current administrators, but only those promoted from teaching positions after July 1.

Despite the opposition, the committee approved the bill by a 4-1 vote. The teacher assessment program passed the panel without opposition and the model merit pay research bill was approved by a 4-2 vote.

Bonus vetoed

In 1935, President Franklin D. Roosevelt went before Congress to explain his veto of the Patman Bonus Bill to pay World War I veterans the remainder of their 1924 bonuses.