

Association of Texas Professional Educators

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April 14, 2009
Release No. 04-09-02

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Senate committee tackles curriculum adoption issues

The Senate Education Committee discussed a bill Tuesday that would overhaul the process for adopting new curriculum and textbooks for Texas students.

Senate Bill 2275, by Sen. Kel Seliger (R–Amarillo), transfers much of the authority to approve textbooks and curriculum from the State Board of Education to the commissioner of education.

“To be effective, curriculum development requires months of hard work by qualified, highly experienced educators, but the aggressive partisanship of the state board has complicated the process in recent years,” said Jennifer Canaday, senior lobbyist for the 112,000-member Association of Texas Professional Educators.

Under Seliger's proposal, educators nominated by the state's 20 education service centers (ESC) would be responsible for recommending new curriculum and the criteria for new textbooks to the commissioner. The SBOE, however, would be able to overrule certain decisions of the commissioner, thereby providing a check to the commissioner's authority.

While the bill would eliminate some criticisms of the board's current processes, some educators have voiced concerns about the number of educators proposed for appointment to the writing teams. The concern is that the number would be insufficient to complete the task in a timely and efficient manner. Additionally, educators who work in school districts—particularly larger urban districts—that typically don't use ESC resources might miss out on opportunities to serve on the curriculum writing teams.

“Following the much-publicized acrimony of the recent English and science curriculum debates, educators are interested in taking a more active role in the curriculum development process,” Canaday said. “We're grateful that Sen. Seliger is looking for innovative ways to ensure that curriculum standards are expert-developed and look forward to sharing educators' input on this bill with the Legislature.”

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The 112,000-member Association of Texas Professional Educators is the largest educators' group in Texas and the largest nonunion educators' group nationwide. Its membership consists of classroom teachers, para-educators, administrators, college students and retired educators. ATPE is committed to advocating for better benefits for all educators, promoting a collaborative work environment and the right of educators to choose the association they feel represents their interests, and providing the best education possible for all Texas school children.