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Details:

(FORM UPDATED: 07/12/2010)

**WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ...
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS**

2007-08

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on ... Education (SC-Ed)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**
- Record of Comm. Proceedings ... **RCP**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt**
 - Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule**
 - Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution)
 - Miscellaneous ... **Misc**
- (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
(**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)

MB

Alberta Darling
Wisconsin State Senator
Member, Joint Committee on Finance

November 13, 2007

Senator John Lehman, Chair
Senate Committee on Education
310 S. State Capitol
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Senator Lehman,

Senate Bill 231, which prohibits the Milwaukee Public Schools from imposing residency requirements on teachers, was referred to the Senate Committee on Education on July 12th.

As you may know, only two of the nation's fifty largest school systems (Milwaukee and Chicago) require its teachers to live in the city. No other school district in Wisconsin has a residency requirement.

Recently, I was contacted by an enthusiastic young teacher who just moved up to Whitefish Bay from Illinois. Even though she and her husband live only a few blocks outside the City of Milwaukee, she was told she could not teach in MPS schools.

The MPS residency requirement is an arbitrary barrier that discourages quality educators from teaching at MPS. A recent Milwaukee Journal Sentinel article, which I have attached, does a nice job explaining how the residency requirement has unfairly forced good teachers out of MPS.

SB 231's Assembly companion, Assembly Bill 482, recently received a public hearing and a unanimous 10-0 recommendation from the Assembly Committee on Education. Given the strong, bipartisan support this bill has, I respectfully request that you schedule a public hearing on SB 231 in the near future.

Please do not hesitate to contact my office if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Sincerely,



ALBERTA DARLING
State Senator
8th District

cc: Members of the Senate Committee on Education

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Ideals collide with frustrations

Educators react strongly to study citing Milwaukee in high turnover of young teachers

By ALAN J. BORSUK
aborsuk@journalsentinel.com

Posted: June 25, 2007

Nicole Campeau is heading to Arizona after a year teaching in Milwaukee Public Schools for which, she says, no education program could have prepared her.

Jenni Gavin is staying as an MPS teacher after "the most rewarding and exhausting 2 1/2 years of my life."

Angie Hanick has worked in MPS for 19 years and says she has seen countless young teachers come and go because of one thing: The requirement that MPS teachers live in the city.

A national study released last week that used Milwaukee as a prime example of the problem of high turnover among teachers, especially early in their careers, brought strong reaction from several dozen current and former MPS teachers.

Some told of the frustrations and challenges of their work. Many criticized the residency rule, which has been in effect for MPS for almost 30 years. Almost all agreed that the report by the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future was on target when it said that the high turnover of teachers was harming the overall quality of the work that goes on in Milwaukee's classrooms.

Almost all said the story of the idealistic, eager newcomer who doesn't last very long in the job is far too familiar.

Among the 50 largest school districts in the United States, MPS and Chicago Public Schools are the only two that require teachers to live in the city, according to a 2006 study by the Wisconsin Policy Research Institute.

Long an aggravation to many teachers - but with strong political support from city political leaders - the residency rule was the focal point of criticism from many teachers who responded.

Hanick said it had been tough on her in some ways to stay in the city, but she did it, in large part because

she works at "a wonderful school" - Maple Tree on the northwest side - and feels supported by her principal.

But she has seen this scenario unfold for many teachers:

"They get into MPS because they want a start. Then they realize they are starting families and will be forced to send their children to a school in Milwaukee unless they make other difficult arrangements to send them elsewhere or pay for a private school. Milwaukee is a tough community to live in with much crime and bad influences for our children. Do you think the young teachers want their children growing up in a neighborhood that is crime-ridden?"

So they move out of the city and take suburban teaching jobs or switch to pursuits other than teaching.

"I have taught with many excellent teachers who have left because of residency," said Diane Barbee, a first-grade teacher at Fletcher School on the far northwest side who has taught in MPS since 1985.

"Luckily, my husband and I were able to find an awesome neighborhood filled with new friends and children. If I hadn't been so lucky, I don't know if I would have stayed. I think the residency rule is a huge factor in quality teachers leaving the district."

Other frustrations

But other teachers cited frustrations more directly related to schools and classrooms as the main reason they left MPS.

Put Campeau at the top of that list. A Milwaukee native who graduated from the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, she had a bad year, primarily working at La Follette School on the north side as a first-grade teacher who also had some 5-year-old kindergarten students.

"I was not given my 'new teacher' mentor until January, and was given no support" from school administration, Campeau wrote in an e-mail. "As a new teacher in MPS, I felt as though I had gone into the wrong profession."

The national study listed leadership of a school as a key factor in making or breaking new teachers, and Campeau said her experience fit that.

In an interview, she said that in the classroom, "I was a referee. I was breaking up fights constantly. I was doing little to no teaching."

"A lot of first-year teachers are so frustrated," she said, when asked about the experiences of others she knew. She said many had been told they would get support in launching their careers and ended up getting little.

'More than just teachers'

Gavin said she was sticking with her teaching job, despite the difficulties.

"The teachers that last where I teach are more than just teachers to our students," she wrote. "We are sometimes mom, tutor, cook, social worker, driver, mediator, confidante, and mentor. My students are members of my family. They stop by the house on the way to the park, go to the mall with us, or stop in for dinner. I have children call me at 8 p.m. because no one is home or no one is able to help them with

their algebra homework. . . .

"We hug our children and wipe their tears when they come to school the morning after their brother, sister, mother, or father was shot and killed the night before. When we are in lockdown because of a shooting across the street at lunch time, we are easing their fears about their younger sibling they think was on the playground when we started hearing the gunshots! This is what they forget to teach you about in college or tell you about in your interview."

She wrote, "There are two main reasons teachers quit - low pay for the hours worked and an unrealistic view of what teaching means. When I look at a new teacher coming in, I can immediately tell if they will last longer than the first quarter. The first thing my kids say to me when we have new staff is, 'Will this one leave us too?' Too often I think to myself, yes, but I won't."

Loretta Ocampo, a teacher for 10 years at Story School, 3815 W. Kilbourn Ave., said in an e-mail, "I am not sure how much longer I want to teach in MPS. I keep teaching what I am supposed to, no longer really having 'fun' with the kids, and test scores continue to prove us useless. Teachers are bashed in the media, the community doesn't value our services, and Central Services tells us to do more."

"How much more can one teacher do? Most of the time I am dealing with behavior problems that interrupt the learning environment. If there were a way to get rid of the students who are constantly interrupting class . . . we, teachers and students, could do better. In MPS you have to be strong and resourceful."

Marcus Wenzel, who has taught health and physical education at Bay View High School the past three years, is moving to a middle school on the southwest side this year.

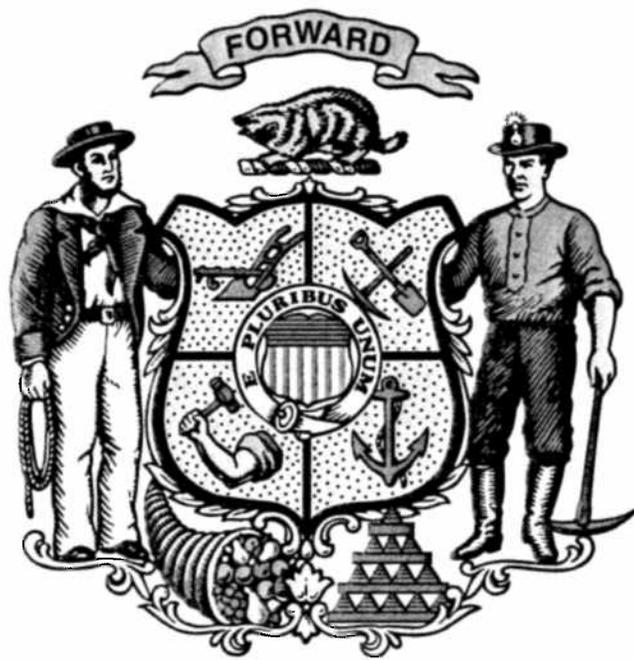
"I stay in MPS because these are the students who need me the most," he wrote. "I like that they are challenging and genuinely appreciative of the hard work of their teachers."

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From the June 26, 2007 editions of the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel
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SB 231
2/1

Stromme, Denise

From: Sen.Darling
Sent: Thursday, January 24, 2008 9:55 AM
To: Sen.Erpenbach; Sen.Hansen; Sen.Kreitlow; Sen.Olsen; Sen.Grothman; Sen.Lazich; Dauscher, Sara; Sen.Lehman
Subject: Good articles on the real consequences of the MPS residency rule

Dear Members of the Senate Committee on Education,

As you know, bipartisan bills to eliminate the unfair MPS teacher residency rule (AB 482, SB 231) have been introduced in both houses of the legislature. AB 482 passed out of the Assembly Education Committee by a vote of 10-0.

In this morning's paper, there is a good article about the unfortunate consequences the residency rule has for students and teachers.

- Alberta



<http://www.jsonline.com/story/index.aspx?id=710766&format=print>

1/24/2008

Right ZIP code, wrong city: Popular MPS science teacher loses job

By ALAN J. BORSUK
aborsuk@journalsentinel.com

Posted: Jan. 23, 2008

Dan Bearss is enthusiastic about teaching science at Custer High School in Milwaukee.

He really likes his kids, and - ask a bunch of them - they think highly of him.

Science teachers are in short supply nationwide and good ones are highly valued, especially at challenging schools such as Custer.

But Bearss' last day at the school will be Friday.

Why? Because it turns out he lives in Brown Deer.

He lived there when he started teaching at Custer six years ago. He readily admitted he lived there when he was called into the Milwaukee Public Schools central office in November.

And he intends to go on living there - it's a house that he and his wife enjoy and, in his view, "the ability to choose where you want to live . . . is a basic right in America."

Given the choice between moving into the city to comply with the residency rule for MPS employees that has been in effect since the late 1970s or leaving, Bearss decided to leave. He intends to find another teaching job, but it won't be in MPS.

"The fact that he lives in Brown Deer doesn't have anything to do with his ability to teach students," said Brandon Starks, who graduated from Custer last year and had Bearss as a teacher for two years. "He's just a Class A teacher, just over the top."

Outside the school on Wednesday, about 15 students met with a reporter and photographer to praise Bearss.

"He was a great teacher," said Sylvester Stewart, a junior. "He was one of the reasons I stayed at Custer. He was a great inspiration to me."

"He *wanted* to teach," said Brandon Thomas.

"He showed up to work every day very joyful," said Grady Clark.

Clark's view of the residency rule: "It's dumb." Thomas said, "It's taking the good out of our community."

More than 160 students at the school signed a petition in recent days to keep Bearss.

Bearss said he never lied about his address. He said he didn't pay much attention to whether the house was in Brown Deer or Milwaukee when he bought it before he was hired by MPS. His ZIP code area, 53223, covers sections of Milwaukee as well as Brown Deer, and he uses a mailing address that says Milwaukee. When he realized the importance of the difference in terms of his employment, he said, he adopted sort of a don't ask, don't tell policy. And no one asked until he got a letter before Thanksgiving saying he was being investigated for a residency violation.

Bearss, 51, said he is a graduate of the U.S. Naval Academy at Annapolis and served 10 years of active military

duty. He then joined a military reserve unit and worked five years for the Defense Intelligence Agency. He was recalled for active duty in Bosnia in 1993. He left the service after that and got a job with a business. He was transferred to Milwaukee, but the company later scaled back, closing its Milwaukee office and laying him off. He decided then to become a teacher.

He was given an emergency permit to teach science at Custer after training that consisted of observing classes for two days. He later got a full teaching license.

"I gave a lot. Anyone would tell you I gave 150% at this school," he said. "For the first time since I left the service . . . I truly enjoy what I do for a living."

MPS officials have no criticism of Bearss as a teacher. "Dan is a great teacher and is well loved by students who do well in his science classes," said MPS spokeswoman Roseann St. Aubin.

But there's the rule. "When teachers join us, they sign a contract that has residency as a condition of employment," St. Aubin said.

The residency rule has been controversial for years. Some say it is unfair and MPS needs good teachers too much to restrict the pool of possible teachers. Others say it doesn't actually have much effect on who teaches overall and it's good for the city to have employees live within the city line. Efforts in the state Legislature to repeal the residency rule recently have not succeeded.

Although the Milwaukee Teachers' Education Association opposes the rule, it has not been a front-burner issue in recent contract negotiations, and the rule, overall, appears to be popular with people in the city and politicians who represent them.

St. Aubin said MPS and teachers union negotiators agreed last fall to convene a committee to study the residency rule. That work hasn't begun yet, she said.

As for Bearss, she said, "It's tough to lose him."

<http://www.620wtmj.com/news/local/14179122.html>

Beloved MPS Teacher Forced to Quit over "Residency Rule"

By Jay Sorgi

Story Created: Jan 24, 2008

Story Updated: Jan 24, 2008

[Click here to listen to Newsradio 620 WTMJ's Jay Sorgi report on a teacher from Brown Deer who worked for an MPS school, but can't do so anymore because he lives in Brown Deer.](#)

Milwaukee Public Schools is forcing a beloved teacher to give up his job because of an address problem.

Custer High School science teacher Dan Bearss lives in Brown Deer, and Milwaukee Public Schools doesn't like it, because it goes against a rule that says you have to live in Milwaukee if you work for MPS.

He moved to Brown Deer six years ago when he started at Custer, and MPS knew about it, but just two months ago, the central office called him on the carpet and essentially said "move, or you're out of here."

Well, he's out of there on Friday, choosing to find another teaching job.

Custer grad Brandon Starks had Bearss as a teacher. He tells the Journal Sentinel that where he lives had nothing to do with how he did his job, and he called Bearss a Class A teacher.

MPS Spokeswoman Roseann St. Aubin agreed with Starks' assesment of Bearss' job performance, but said that teachers sign a contract that includes the clause that they have to live in the city.