

TERRY MUSSER

STATE REPRESENTATIVE - 92ND Assembly District

November 17, 2006

Representative Leah Vukmir
Chair, Special Committee on Charter Schools
307 North
State Capitol

Re: Charter Schools

Dear Representative Vukmir:

I am writing to you in my capacity as chair of the Joint Legislative Council's Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations which is appointed in each biennium to study issues relating to American Indians and American Indian tribes and bands (tribes) in Wisconsin.

One of the recommendations made by the 2004-06 State-Tribal Relations Committee would have authorized an additional entity associated with tribes (the proposed Tribal Charter School Authorizing Board) to contract for the establishment of charter schools that are independent of school districts (so-called 2r or independent charter schools). The recommendation was based on a proposal presented to the committee by then committee member Representative Terri McCormick. It would have created the board as an independent state agency and would have required the charter schools to be located on a reservation or off-reservation trust land. The committee's recommendation was introduced as companion bills 2005 Assembly Bill 631 and 2005 Senate Bill 302. Neither bill was enacted.

As you may recall, Representative McCormick later introduced a separate proposal, 2005 Assembly Bill 947, that would have authorized any college or university located on a reservation or non-reservation trust land to establish or contract for the establishment of independent charter schools if the college or university was accredited by the Higher Learning Commission of the North Central Association of Colleges and Schools and the charter school was located on a reservation or off-reservation trust land. That bill also did not pass.

When the 2006-08 State-Tribal Relations Committee held its first meeting this week, several committee members asked that the concept of a tribal authorizer of independent charter schools be brought forward for consideration in the 2007-08 Legislative Session.

The committee was informed that the Special Committee on Charter Schools, which you chair, is addressing which entities may establish or contract for the establishment of charter schools and is scheduled to discuss the topic at its November 28 meeting. It was suggested that your committee be asked to address the matter.

Although your committee members may not adopt the exact language of either of the proposals described above, I ask that your committee consider including, in any recommendations it may make relating to additional authorizers of independent charter schools, a provision to permit a tribe or an entity established by a tribe (such as a tribally controlled college or tribal department of education) to establish or contract for the establishment of independent charter schools on a reservation or off-reservation trust land.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Terry M Musser". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized 'T' and 'M'.

Representative Terry Musser
Chair, Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations

cc: Members of the Special Committee on State-Tribal Relations