



WISCONSIN LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

BUILDING WISCONSIN'S WORKFORCE

Legislative Council Conference Room
Madison, Wisconsin

January 22, 2009
10:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

[The following is a summary of the January 22, 2009 meeting of the Special Committee on Building Wisconsin's Workforce. The file copy of this summary has appended to it a copy of each document prepared for or submitted to the committee during the meeting. A digital recording of the meeting is available on our Web site at <http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lc>.]

Call to Order and Roll Call

Chair Strachota called the meeting to order. The roll was called and it was determined that a quorum was present.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT: Rep. Pat Strachota, Chair; Sen. Robert Wirch, Vice Chair; Sen. Alberta Darling; Rep. Mark Honadel; and Public Members Jim Golembeski, John Keckhaver, Mark Kessenich, Steve Mercaitis, Peter Thillman, and Judy Warmuth.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS EXCUSED: Sen. Robert Jauch; Rep. Gordon Hintz; and Public Member Carol Wagenson.

COUNCIL STAFF PRESENT: Scott Grosz and Jessica Karls, Staff Attorneys.

Approval of the Minutes of the Committee's November 19, 2008 Meeting

Chair Strachota moved, seconded by Mr. Thillman, that the minutes of the November 19, 2008 meeting be approved. The motion passed unanimously by voice vote.

Discussion of Committee Assignment

WLC: 0126/2, Relating to Requiring an Additional Credit in Mathematics for a High School Diploma

Chair Strachota described two committee options relating to high school mathematics credits. She noted that staff had prepared both a letter to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and bill draft WLC: 0126/2, each relating to the requirement of an additional high school mathematics credit. Committee members discussed the merits of the letter and the bill draft. The committee also discussed the related topic of equivalent course options for mathematics credit. After this discussion, the committee reached consensus to express its intentions regarding high school mathematics through a letter to DPI.

By unanimous voice vote, the committee approved a letter to DPI recommending that the department consider revisions to the state's model academic standards, including the continued approval of equivalent course options related to mathematics credit.

The committee also approved letters to the Department of Workforce Development, the Wisconsin Technical College System, the University of Wisconsin System, and DPI containing recommendations of the committee to these agencies. The letters were approved en masse by unanimous voice vote.

WLC: 0353/P1, Relating to Lifelong Learning Accounts Program

Chair Strachota began the discussion of WLC: 0353/P1, relating to a lifelong learning accounts (LILA) program, by asking members to reflect on prior discussions and offer their thoughts regarding the components they felt were necessary to a LILA program. Committee members discussed issues including the definition of education expenses, indexing dollar amounts specified by the bill, penalties for non-qualified account expenditures, and the treatment of sole proprietors under the bill draft.

Following this discussion, Scott Grosz and Jessica Karls, Legislative Council Staff, described WLC: 0353/P1, and emphasized sections of the bill draft that related to concerns raised by committee members. Mr. Grosz and Ms. Karls also highlighted sections of the bill that offered substantive decision-making opportunities for committee members. Chair Strachota summarized the discussions of the committee and received the committee members' agreement that they were interested in the LILA concept and that further work on the issue was desired.

Student Loan Forgiveness

Mr. Grosz described student loan forgiveness programs under current law, including loan forgiveness targeting nursing students who maintain post-graduation employment in the state. Mr. Grosz informed the committee that this model could be adapted to target other industries or credentials chosen by the committee. Sen. Darling suggested education tax credits as an alternative incentive model for education. Committee members expressed interest in this topic and Chair Strachota noted that she and Sen. Darling would further investigate possible committee efforts related to education tax credits.

Memo No. 2, Committee Recommendations to the Joint Legislative Council, as of December 2, 2008 (December 2, 2008)

Ms. Karls described Memo. No. 2 to the committee members. Memo. No. 2 summarized the efforts, to date, of the committee. Ms. Karls asked for committee feedback if members believed there to be items missing from the Memo.

Other Business

Chair Strachota asked committee members for suggestions regarding topics that the committee has yet to review. Mr. Kessenich suggested that the committee might wish to be briefed on efforts relating to the likely federal stimulus package. Mr. Golembeski and Mr. Keckhaver raised issues relating to the role of higher education in student career development.

Plans for Future Meetings

The next meeting of the Special Committee will be convened at the call of the chair.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

SG:ksm