

Board Of Ed. Faces A 2-Year Moratorium

BY BOB MERCER
State Capitol Bureau

PIERRE — State officials have said repeatedly this winter there aren't any plans by the state Board of Education to adopt additional Common Core standards or any other multi-state standards for South Dakota schools.

The House of Representatives voted 63-3 for the temporary ban. The state Department of Education supported the move, which its lead House sponsor, Rep. Jim Bolin, R-Canton, described as "a waiting period."

The measure, SB 64, also has some potential long-term effect. It would require the state board to take at least six months to consider any content standards and have a quorum of board members at each of four public hearings required in Sioux Falls, Rapid City,

Aberdeen and Pierre.

The Senate previously passed the legislation 28-6. Its next stop is the desk of Gov. Dennis Daugaard, who seems likely to sign it into law. Its prime sponsor is Sen. Ernie Otten, R-Tea, who worked with state Education Secretary Melody Schopp on it.

Otten brought a package of three bills dealing with Common Core.

His most sweeping measure called for creation of a special review panel, but it failed in the Senate last month at the hands of an odd coalition of Republicans opposed to Common Core, Republicans who thought it should have gone through the appropriations process, and Democrats supporting Common Core.

Otten's third bill, SB 63, protecting student privacy awaits House action. It also has the support of the Education Department and many opponents of Common Core.

The state board adopted the

national Common Core standards for math and English language arts in November 2010 after a public hearing. Last year, as schools began to implement the new standards, opponents began to go to state board meetings to protest.

Bolin has fought Common Core for the past three years. Numerous bills and resolutions came through the Legislature this session in an attempt to knock it off the tracks but Otten's two remaining bills were the only ones that have succeeded.

Bolin called for passage of the two-year moratorium Wednesday. "I consider this bill half a loaf from a very excellent bakery," he said, calling it "a good compromise — at least for now."

He urged the House to resist any amendments, but none came. The only other House member to speak on it was Rep. Jacqueline Sly, R-Rapid City. She is chairman of the House Education Committee. She urged its passage too.

S.D. Senators Consider Medical Services For Pregnant Women Illegally In The United States

BY BOB MERCER
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PIERRE — Last year South Dakota legislators deadlocked on providing pre-natal care to pregnant women who are poor and are illegally in the United States. One year and 195 births later, the issue is back this legislative session and the outcome seems just as uncertain.

The House of Representatives voted 46-22 in favor on Feb. 10. The Senate Health and Human Services Committee voted 4-3 Wednesday to endorse the legislation's passage and referred it to the Senate Appropriations Committee for budgeting purposes.

The average cost of prenatal services to pregnant women under South Dakota's Medicaid program is about \$3,400, according to state officials. That is about 80 times less than the average cost for a prematurely born baby in South Dakota.

The goal of expanding the pre-natal services is to help the mothers and children be healthier and to reduce premature deliveries. Premature birth is the leading cause of death for infants in South Dakota.

Gov. Dennis Daugaard supports HB 1158, according to one of his senior aides,

Deb Bowman.

But Bowman recommended that the bill be sent to the appropriators because, she said, provisions of the state Medicaid plan typically aren't put in state law for flexibility reasons.

"I don't want to hurt the bill at all," she said.

Normally Medicaid help isn't available for people who are in the U.S. illegally. But if the children are born in the U.S. they become citizens and become eligible for government programs.

Sen. Jim Bradford, D-Pine Ridge, asked how the mothers will get over their fear against coming forward.

"I wish I had a really great answer for you, senator. I don't," Bowman said. Federal law prohibits Medicaid providers and officials from reporting people if they're here illegally, she said.

The bill's prime sponsor is a medical doctor, Rep. Scott Ecklund, R-Brandon. He said statistics show there will be large savings if there is more pre-natal care.

"My goal is to get lives saved," Ecklund said. "We're losing six kids a year that are U.S. citizens if you look at statistics by not doing this."



Bowman



Ecklund

"This does not make a statement on either side of the immigration debate," he said. "I am not for illegal immigration."

The House passed a similar bill in 2013 on a 39-28 vote.

But the legislation was changed by the Senate to provide broader Medicaid coverage to pregnant women with incomes up to 140 percent of the federal poverty level. The House and the Senate couldn't agree and the legislation died.

House Democratic leader Bernie Hunhoff of Yankton testified for Ecklund's legislation Wednesday and complimented the Daugaard administration for its efforts on infant mortality.

"You've got a bill before you today that can make a difference," Hunhoff said.

An illegal-immigrant opponent spoke up for the bill. "We're going to be responsible because this baby is going to be born here," Rep. Manny Steele, R-Sioux Falls, said. He called the legislation logical as a matter of compassion and as a savings to the public.

No opponents testified. Sen. Phil Jensen, R-Rapid City, proposed that the

legislation go to appropriations without recommendation. "We really do not know how much this is going to cost," he said. "I think that would be a right move."

A fiscal note hasn't been prepared yet by the Legislative Research Council. The 2013 fiscal note estimated costs at \$241,777 in state general funds and \$286,119 in federal Medicaid funds.

Bowman explained that the expanded Medicaid coverage would be only for pregnancy-related matters and wouldn't pay for unrelated health problems such as a broken arm.

All seven members of the health committee agreed with sending the bill to appropriations. They split whether to endorse it. Jensen's motion for no-recommendation fell short 3-4. The committee then voted 4-3 to endorse its passage.

"We want this to go through. We just need to do the details on it," Sen. Jean Hunhoff, R-Yankton, said. She is chairman of the Senate health committee.

One of the Senate appropriations committee members happened to be waiting to testify on the next bill on the health committee's agenda. "We'll have your interest at heart," Sen. Al Novstrup, R-Aberdeen, told her.

Man Testifies In Child Murder Trials

SIoux FALLS (AP) — A man charged with murder in the death of a toddler in South Dakota has told a jury that he did not hurt the victim.

Twenty-six-year-old Congolese refugee Manegabe Ally testified Wednesday during his trial for the death of 18-month-old Merveil Kasangu, the son of a woman he lived with.

The Argus Leader reports he faces a mandatory life sentence if convicted of first-degree murder.

Ally was caring for Kasangu on Christmas Eve 2012, when he called 911 to report that the boy wasn't breathing. The child died in the hospital the next day.

Ally told the jury through an interpreter that he happily cared for the toddler.

Prosecutors have presented testimony for days from doctors who say the death was a homicide resulting from blunt force trauma.

Fire Races Through Omaha U. Dorm

OMAHA, Neb. (AP) — Firefighters are on the scene of a two-alarm fire at an apartment dormitory on the University of Nebraska at Omaha campus.

The fire was reported shortly before 3:30 p.m. Wednesday. There were no immediate reports of injuries.

Flames could be seen shooting from the roof of one of UNO's Scott Village student apartment complexes, located on the university's Pacific campus at 64th and Pacific streets.

UNO spokesman Charley Reed says displaced students are being asked to go to the Scott Conference Center next door to the apartments or to nearby Mammel Hall.

Parents of UNO students can call 402-778-6211 for more information.

There's no word yet on the cause of the fire.

The Scott Village student housing complex is made up of four-bedroom units, each with a kitchen.

Burns Cause Haze Near Mt. Rushmore

RAPID CITY (AP) — South Dakota authorities say people can expect to see smoke and haze around Mount Rushmore National Memorial this week as officials plan to start burning slash piles.

The Rapid City Journal reports the prescribed burns will happen on 50 acres that surround the monument. They will start Wednesday and end Saturday.

Officials say the burns were prompted by recent snow and favorable weather conditions.

Voters Could Add Deadwood Games

PIERRE (AP) — A South Dakota Senate committee has endorsed a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow Deadwood casinos to offer roulette, keno and craps.

The House has already approved the measure that would put the proposal to a statewide vote on the November ballot.

Deadwood casinos now offer slot machines, poker and blackjack. If the Legislature decides to put the proposal on the ballot, voters would decide whether to add roulette, keno and craps.

Supporters say the added games are needed so Deadwood can compete with casinos in other states, particularly those in Colorado and Iowa. Tribal casinos also can offer the same gambling permitted in Deadwood.

The Senate State Affairs Committee voted 5-4 Wednesday to support putting the issue on this fall's ballot.

Panel OKs More Help Center Rules

PIERRE (AP) — The South Dakota Senate Health and Human Services Committee has granted unanimous support for a measure to further regulate the state's pregnancy health centers.

These centers currently cannot perform abortions or refer clients to abortion clinics. Under the proposed bill, the centers could not facilitate adoptions. The centers could still refer women to other organizations for adoption services.

The bill's co-sponsor says his goal was to maintain a neutral environment, where the help center cannot profit from a pregnant woman's adoption.

One opponent says the legislation still favors adoption over abortion. She says the law the bill would modify has been in court for the last three years.

Merger

From Page 1

will have 11 students in their home facility in preschool through fourth grade this fall. Hartington has a D-1 Ranking with an enrollment of 240 in K-12 but does not offer preschool. The ranking of the Hartington district after the merger is still undecided said Anderson as they are awaiting NSAA determinations of school enrollments due to the numbers of districts which are considering merger options at this time.

Newcastle superintendent Joey Lefdal could see the problem of declining numbers coming on the horizon for a couple years. The Newcastle district started handling lower student numbers by using tools like co-opting with other area districts including Wynot, Laurel and Coleridge for long distance learning opportunities which included sharing teachers and creating larger class sizes and varied curriculum. Eventually Newcastle

began losing students. They opted into neighboring districts Lefdal said and finally there weren't enough students for athletic teams.

"Outmigration really was the final straw so to say," Lefdal said. "We started weighing our options and listened to the community; spent time with local people." Lefdal knew the school had to be concerned with class size, test scores, curriculum opportunities and the decision had to be attractive to the remaining student body and their parents.

One of the discussion points in the petition will be the opportunity for Newcastle to keep pre-school through fourth grade in the current building. The two boards will have to consider how that will work and if it is truly feasible; and that will be a tough decision for them to make.

Busing students is another discussion point. Newcastle is 28 miles from Hartington and the Hartington District is considering pick-up points at the end of their current bus routes and/or possibly a pickup in Newcastle.

"Really we are keeping all the students in mind when we discuss combining the two districts," Hartington Board president Jason Dendinger said. "We will look at curriculum, will the merger create more sections in our classrooms and will we be able to offer expanded curriculum due to the increase of students. The long-term benefits will be carefully considered."

Dendinger certainly believes it will offer the Newcastle students more options and a greater variety of class offerings. The quality of education will need to be maintained and the commitment to all the students kept strong.

The districts hope to have the merger process completed for the 2014-2015 school year.

"Every community wants to keep their local school open," said Lefdal. "And it has been hard on the Newcastle community but I hope to see good things come out of this. We need to bring Newcastle together to support this change and to do good things once again."

Adoption

From Page 1

director for NARAL Pro-Choice South Dakota, testified by telephone against the bill.

Peterson said the legislation doesn't place the same tight restrictions against adoption services as already are in law against abortion providers.

"This bill is nonsensical," she said.

The legislation would place the adoption-services prohibition in the same sections of the law regarding the abortion-services prohibition.

Novstrup said it's "more nonsensical" to be against legislation that moves "in the right direction."

House members approved the legislation 54-14 on Feb. 10.

Novstrup said the required counseling isn't taking place while the lawsuit slowly proceeds. He said a third center in Spearfish dropped out because of the lawsuit. He said he's been told five or six centers will open when the lawsuit is over.

Alpha Center at Sioux Falls and Care Net Pregnancy Resource Center of Rapid City are the two counseling centers on the state registry.

"This bill levels the playing field," Sen. Phil Jensen, R-Rapid City, said.

Sen. Jim Bradford, D-Pine Ridge, said he was told to not submit legislation on the Indian Child Welfare Act this year because there is legal action under way.

"This bill is on my side and I'm pro-choice. You're going to eliminate the adoption. I would think you would want that available if you're pro-life," Bradford said. "So I can't be against the bill. But I don't understand this bringing bills that are in lawsuits."



AM 1450

MORNING COFFEE
WEEKDAYS MONDAY-FRIDAY

Thursday, February 27

7:40 am Yankton Conv/Vis Bureau (Lisa Scheve)
8:20 am Yankton Chamber (Carmen Schramm)

Friday, February 28

7:40 am Yankton P&D (Nathan Johnson)
8:20 am Riverrat Marathon (Bruce Schild)

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