

HCS SS SCS SB 968 and SCS SB 969 -- SCHOOL PERSONNEL

SPONSOR: Shields (Baker)

COMMITTEE ACTION: Voted "do pass" by the Committee on Education by a vote of 19 to 3.

This substitute requires successor school districts to ensure access to the continuation of health care for retired teachers and employees of a district that lapses, is merged or divided, or otherwise loses its corporate structure, if the original district provided health care benefits at the time of its dissolution.

The proration factor is removed from the career ladder entitlement line in the School Funding Formula, and speech pathologists who hold both a teaching certificate and a certificate of clinical competence qualify for stage III of the career ladder under certain circumstances. The provision concerning the proration factor for career ladder contains an emergency clause.

The substitute permits districts to offer hiring incentives and salary schedule modifications under certain circumstances to both tenured and probationary teachers. Districts meeting certain financial criteria that place contracted teachers on leave more than 40 days after the education appropriations bill is signed must pay the teachers the greater of the salary for days worked or \$3,000. Teachers whose contracts are not renewed because of certain conditions that have a bearing on financial resources will receive notice of the reason. "Teacher" is defined to include certificated teachers who teach at the prekindergarten level in all districts except St. Louis City. The threshold for job-sharing is lowered from 17 to 15 hours per week for retirement calculations. Districts will not be reimbursed by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education for more than one A+ program coordinator based on the number of students. School district officials, like officials of other political subdivisions, are currently limited to \$1,500 per annum in the amount they can accept for performing services for or making sales to their district; the substitute raises the amount for school boards to \$5,000.

The substitute prohibits public school personnel from performing strip searches on students and from requiring students to remove religious emblems or garments if they are worn in a nondisruptive manner. School bus drivers over the age of 70 will continue to be re-examined annually, but the background check will occur every three years instead of annually. School districts that permit students to claim excused absences for athletics or other extracurricular activities must let students who participate in

Future Farmers of America, 4-H, and similar organized competitions to attend competitions when the board policy permits and the sponsoring school employee approves. Students in these instances may be counted for average daily attendance.

FISCAL NOTE: Estimated Cost on General Revenue Fund of \$3,947,351 to Unknown in FY 2005, \$5,447,351 to Unknown in FY 2006, and \$5,447,351 to Unknown in FY 2007. Estimated Cost to Other State Funds of \$10,000 in FY 2005, \$0 in FY 2006, and \$0 in FY 2007.

PROPOSERS: Supporters say that SB 969 addresses concerns with the career ladder by making benefits more certain and providing the same benefits for qualified speech pathologists as for National Board certified teachers.

Supporters of SB 968 say that the bill is designed to encourage school boards to make their decision to reduce staff early.

Testifying for the bills were Senator Shields; Missouri State Teachers Association; Missouri National Education Association; School Administrators Coalition; and Missouri School Boards Association. Testifying for SB 969 were Rolla Public Schools; and Missouri Speech, Hearing, and Language Association.

OPPOSERS: There was no opposition voiced to the committee.

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