

# Kentucky House passes reform bill amid amendments, vote exchanging

By Mark H. Chelgren  
Associated Press Writer  
FRANKFORT, MARCH 21 (AP) - The vote on the education and packaging in the House showed that Kentucky's schools depends more on political accommodations than the popularity of the proposal.

The House passed the bill Wednesday 56-42, but the three and a half hour debate demonstrated widespread opposition to the education theories and practices it contains.

At one point, that fragile base of support threatened to crumble down over a proposal to reduce the local tax burden in the package.

Diverse amendments were called and many addressed the bill to comply to a 1990 package.

Only one really threatened the vote of the bill. That was the crucial test put together.

The crucial test was on the issue of property taxes, the basic method of paying for education locally and also among the most detested of all taxes in the state.

The bill includes a provision that local school districts have to pay a rate of 30 cents per \$100 assessed valuation. Another 5-cent equivalent tax would be needed to qualify for state aid for construction. The current minimum is a 25-cent equivalent.

Representative Peter Worthington, D-Ewing, proposed an amendment that would have retained the education theory and practices it contains.

Worthington, the speaker pro tem of the House, said he will try again to ease the tax burden on "double whammy" on many communities because of the higher state taxes. His amendment was viewed as helpful to rural legislators, many of whom represent districts that would have to raise their taxes.

Other than legislation opposed the bill because they felt it will lessen the likelihood of large state tax increase while rural areas, with poor property assessments and low taxes, will avoid paying their share.

The amendment "goes to the heart of the fragile bargain that has been struck in support of this bill," said Representative Bill Lear, D-Leitchfield.

Worthington's amendment was approved 50-45, which prompted a hasty recess, frantic meetings and a closed caucus against students in poor districts coalition and the bill were doomed.

When the House resumed work, the amendment was reconsidered and defeated.

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put their own reputations on the line to pass it.

It also signaled the end to nine months of discussion of a new direction for Kentucky education.

That began last year when the Supreme Court ruled the current system of education is unconstitutional and discriminated against students in poor districts.

It also indicated the largest tax increase in the state's history, a \$1.1-billion package of taxes that pays for the education reform and a host of expansions of other state programs.

"I don't think people can expect a transformation overnight," said Representative Jody Richards, D-Bowling Green, the majority caucus chairman and advocate for the package. "But there are things in there that will dramatically improve education in Kentucky over the years."

Governor Wallace Wilkinson took the summary of the plan to the House chamber through the debate. "We've moved at least one decade further into the 21st century," Wilkinson said. "It was

taken away some of the job protections enjoyed by school administrators to allow their removal for failure to perform as taken out. Representative Kenny Tucker during the last decade. It also reflected a new opinion among many legislators that education should be left to educators rather than politicians.

That, often harsh debate over the authority of school boards and superintendents were revealed as were disagreements over the education reform and a host of expansions of other state programs.

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# Pet projects fare well in legislative process

By Bruce Schreiner  
Associated Press Writer  
FRANKFORT, March 21 (AP) - Lawmakers already have tasted the fruits of supporting the landmark education restructuring bill, but apparently saving state funds for a multitude of pet projects for the folks back home.

Taxic legislators to fall behind the hammer of education reform. House Democratic leaders ordered more than a dozen items to be tacked onto the bill on Wednesday.

The perks ranged from a \$10 million arena at Murray State University to riprap on the Ohio River in Meade County. Other requests included state funding for new buildings on college campuses, plus state support of museums, parks and other projects.

Some opponents, meanwhile, have incurred the wrath of House Speaker Dan Blumberg. Projects for their constituents have been scratched from the budget, and some coveted committee chairmanships may be lost.

That shows how politically charged the education reform bill has become.

Shortly after the pivotal House vote Wednesday, Blumberg could barely contain his anger at Jefferson County Mayor for opposing the bill.

Blumberg also targeted Louisville Mayor Jerry Abramson and Jefferson County Judge Executive David Armstrong with his own verbal lash.

He accused them of showing more concern for the city's economic development than improving education for all Kentuckians.

"I don't think the mayor or the judge did a blessed thing to help the school package," Blumberg said. "They were working on COX."

Blumberg was referring to his bill to deregulate utilities in Jefferson County. Humana Inc. Chairman David Jones has warned his company will remove thousands of jobs from Louisville if the bill doesn't pass.

Blumberg admitted that after he undermines the bill he will be patient.

"I'm working on my patience," he said. "But it will be worth it in the end among those who hope Blumberg is forgetting the Jefferson County lawmakers who opposed the bill."

Representative Duffin Priddy, D-Louisville and head of the Jefferson County delegation, said he opposed the \$1 billion tax increase to finance the education improvements. She said other county lawmakers shared her sentiment.

Priddy said she didn't think the delegation's vote would threaten state bond issues in a referendum on a bill Thursday for future Kentucky school bonds, an added safety precaution stemming from a fiery bus crash near Carrollton in 1988.

The bill would require a left-side door and a reinforced side body on county buses built starting in 1991 that carry 24 or more passengers.

The committee voted 12 to 6 to send Senate Bill 261 to the full House. The Senate passed the bill 26-13 last month.

Twenty-four children and three adults were killed in the Carrollton crash, which involved a 1977 model bus owned by a church in Louisville. Larry Mahoney, who was driving drunk when his pickup crashed head-on into the bus, was convicted in the case last year.

Priddy said he would have a third door in the bus, most of the kids support would have gotten off, said Senator Virgil Pearman, the bill's sponsor.

Pearman, D-Radcliff, had a nephew and great-niece killed in the crash. A niece and two other great-nieces were burned, but survived.

He said he would have had five doors that would have gotten out, he said. "But whatever we can do to make them safer."

Representative Stephen Keith, R-Manchester, said he feared children might pry open the extra door and fall out. Keith has been a sponsor of the door would be latched. He said it would require a "big effort" by children to open the door.

Lentz said children would be seated next to the door. He said a safety alarm would notify a driver when children were playing with the door.

The bill also doors were recommended by a bus safety task force appointed by Governor Wallace Wilkinson after the Carrollton crash. The bill would make the task force a permanent state agency. Another committee approved a bill to toughen Kentucky's drunken-driving law.

Without discussion, the panel voted 11-0 to send Senate Bill 183 to the full House. The bill declared the Senate 25-0 earlier this month. The bill would require a driver's blood alcohol level to be .02 or higher to be considered competent in the Senate would allow revocation of a certain license before the trial of some people charged with drunken driving. Critics said the administrative process would be unfair.

The license would be taken at the time of a sobriety test. The revocation would be temporary. Licensees for 25 days. Drivers could appeal the revocation through the court within 10 days and would get a hearing with 25 days.

Also, the bill would make fourth-offense drunken driving felony for six or fewer children. The House passed a version making the registration mandatory.

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remain.

The budget also includes funding for the secretary's office in the Public Protection and Regulation Cabinet that had been removed. Clarke, D-Hanville, said he met with Wilkinson late Wednesday afternoon over a list of items the governor wanted to make sure were covered in months of hearings on the bill. The bill would allow lawmakers to amend the plan by simple majority vote before adjourning the final closed.

The committee spent the past two days putting together a bill that take care of representatives who vote for the education and add to the spending document.

Some projects also were taken out to punish legislators who did not vote along, notably a \$10 million renovation center and library at Northern Kentucky University.

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Harper said he would not vote for the bill because of the way the area had been pushed.

Another Republican, Richard Turner of Tompkinsville, complained about other cuts though he voted for the bill.

Also added to the budget Thursday were the following items:

- Authorization for an auditorium and fine arts center at Henderson Community College. Local sources have pledged the debt service on the building for the coming two years with the state presumably picking up in the future.
- Three new full-time positions in the governor's office that had been deleted were reinstated.
- About \$100,000 per year earmarked for the Commission for the Blind. Drug Free Kentucky in the governor's office was also reinstated.
- \$1 million that had been cut from the Revenue Cabinet program to reassess all property in the state was restored.
- \$1.5 million for a motor vehicle taxation system was also put in the Revenue Cabinet.
- The most significant monetary action of the day was to make several adjustments to the lowest paid state employees.
- About 11,000 workers whose salaries fall more than 20 percent in Jefferson County. Humana Inc. Chairman David Jones has warned his company will remove thousands of jobs from Louisville if the bill doesn't pass.
- Blumberg admitted that after he undermines the bill he will be patient.
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committee, where it has support.

Under the bill, the state Transportation Cabinet would submit its five-year Road Plan to lawmakers each six months before each legislative session.

The interim Senate Committee on Transportation would begin four months of hearings on the plan. The bill would allow lawmakers to amend the plan by simple majority vote before adjourning the final closed.

Each regular legislative session would enact a two-year road plan as part of the executive budget. The four-year construction plan would take care of representatives who vote for the education and add to the spending document.

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# Bill calls for tax phase-out

By Bruce Schreiner  
Associated Press Writer  
FRANKFORT, March 23 (AP) - The Senate voted to phase out the state inheritance tax in an effort to halt the departure of retired Kentuckians - and their bank accounts - to states with a more competitive rate.

Senators amended an omnibus revenue bill Friday to eliminate the tax in four years for children and grandchildren. The amendment was approved 34-0.

Senator Jim Cooper, who offered the amendment, said that more Kentuckians would stay if the state didn't claim a share of what they have for their children and grandchildren. Many now drain Florida and other tax havens, he said.

When they leave, they usually take everything with them, including their bank accounts. That's why they are leaving the state, he said.

"Not only do we lose people's financial situations, we lose them as contributing members to our society," said Karen D. Louisville.

The measure, House Bill 151, passed the Senate 31-13. It will return to the House, which will decide whether to accept the tax phase-out.

Kentucky would lose \$2.75 billion annually in taxes during the phase-out, Karen said. The loss would reach \$15 billion each year the tax was eliminated.

However, the state should reap financial dividends from the phase-out, he said. That's because retired citizens persuaded to remain in Kentucky would continue paying state income, sales and intangibles taxes.

"There's a substantial body of information that suggests that during a four-year period, if a wash, and ultimately you end up making money," the senator said.

He said he had been told that Kentucky retirees move but don't leave their children. When they are considering a \$1 billion cash when tax payments have prompted such decisions.

Senator Ed Daniel, D-Springfield, questioned whether lawmakers should eliminate the tax when they are considering a \$1 billion cash when tax payments have prompted such decisions.

The bill, which passed 32-1, would establish a schedule of child support payments based on income and family size. It also would establish a schedule to make sure payments are made.

Senator Dan Seim, who cast the dissenting vote, dubbed it the "young daddy's" bill.

Seim, D-Louisville, said the bill would require employers to withhold wages for child support. Employers would have to pay the cost of the bill, which would cost \$1 million in delinquent child support, he said.

Other bills, however, that the bill doesn't deal with the need to make sure payments are made.

Seim said the bill would strengthen efforts to collect child support from many Kentuckians reluctant to pay. Last year, the state collected more than \$65 million in delinquent child support, he noted.

"What we are trying to do is keep people from divorcing children," Seim said.

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# Third door to be added

By Bruce Schreiner  
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FRANKFORT, March 23 (AP) - The House Education Committee approved a bill Thursday to require a third door for future Kentucky school buses, an added safety precaution stemming from a fiery bus crash near Carrollton in 1988.

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House Bill 184 would have the Department for Social Services set up a registration program for home-based day-care centers.

# Minimum wage would increase under approved Senate bill

FRANKFORT, March 21 (AP) - Kentucky's minimum wage would increase under a bill approved by the State Labor and Industry Committee.

House Bill 187 would boost the state's wage from the current \$3.25 an hour to \$3.80 this July 15. The wage would increase to \$4.25 a year later.

Supporting the bill were Sen. Fred B. Bland, D-Frankfort; Patti Weaver, D-Walton; David McMaster, D-Paineville; and Kelley Friend, D-Owensboro.

Two Republicans - Walker Baker of Glasgow and Jack Tracy - and Democrat John Hall of Henderson voted against it Wednesday.

Hall said the higher wage could cause a hardship for many small businesses already struggling. He said they employees always have the option to quit and find other jobs with higher pay.

Another opponent was Mark Morgan Jr., president of the Kentucky Retail Federation, who also warned that the bill would hurt businesses.

The state minimum wage applies to businesses with gross sales below \$152,000 in a year. However, businesses with four-year gross sales averages of less than \$155,000 in any year were covered by any minimum wage.

The bill would allow a sub-minimum wage for workers under age 20. That wage would be \$3.25 per hour this July 15 and \$3.61 a year later. That wage would be eliminated on April 1, 1991.

The House passed the bill 90-1 earlier this month.

In other action, the committee authorized the House passage bill to regulate day care operations for each day-care operator caring for six or fewer children. The House passed a version making the registration mandatory.

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# Site-based management causes division

By Charles A. Schreiner  
Associated Press Writer  
FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) - A main feature of the school reform bill is site-based management. The measure would give school districts next year - has divided the Senate Education Committee.

The idea is to give individual schools the regulatory freedom to decide how best to educate their students.

But the principal would have to be a member of a decision-making council, and "you cannot lead by committee," Senator David Williams said Monday.

But the Senate Education Committee also approved the bill. Blumberg said that some of the area's most coveted spending projects - including an arena and library addition at Northern Kentucky University - were dead, because of the bill would hurt the bill back into the budget.

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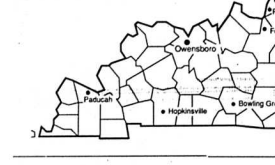
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# Vo-Ed legislation hailed as landmark

By Bruce Schreiner  
Associated Press Writer  
FRANKFORT, Ky. (AP) - Vocational-education programs scattered throughout state government would merge under a House-passed bill as a "landmark" effort to better train thousands of Kentuckians who don't attend college.

A bill for Workforce Development by House Bill 204 would oversee adult education, vocational education and vocational rehabilitation programs.

Improving vocational programs rival in importance with vocational education, Representative Clayton Little, D-Virgin, said Monday.

He noted that about 80 percent of Kentucky's residents don't attend college. Those Kentuckians will shoulder much of the taxpaying burden to support the public education system being designed by lawmakers, Little said. "Yet many of those people are untrained."

"This... legislation is a landmark in education in Kentucky," he said.

The bill was proposed by the Wilkinson administration. It called the House the House 93-1 and advanced to the Senate.

"This is going to increase the commitment by state government to those young people who choose not to go on to college," said Representative Mike Ward, D-Louisville, the bill's chief sponsor.

By making Kentuckians better trained, the state will become more attractive to industry looking for skilled workers, he said.

By giving adult education cabinet status, the programs should become more flexible and more attuned to the demands of industry, Ward said.

"We need to react to economic development projects quickly and by having all these things under one umbrella, we will be able to do it," Ward said. "We don't need to keep training welders if that's what we need electronics specialists."

The House also decided to give cities and counties the same Wilkinson signs several measures into law

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# Wilkinson signs several measures into law

FRANKFORT, March 21 (AP) - Governor Wallace Wilkinson announced Wednesday that he has signed these bills into law:

- House Bill 149, which requires the Kentucky Emergency Response Commission to begin imposing fees to help pay for the Automated Vehicle Information System.
- HB 229, to assign the Legislative Research Commission to study the feasibility of requiring quarterly health insurance contributions for vehicles being licensed and health maintenance organizations to offer their coverage statewide.
- HB 232, to remove the Finance Cabinet's responsibility for House Bill 149, which requires the Kentucky Emergency Response Commission to begin imposing fees to help pay for the Automated Vehicle Information System.
- HB 233, to assign the Legislative Research Commission to study the feasibility of requiring quarterly health insurance contributions for vehicles being licensed and health maintenance organizations to offer their coverage statewide.
- HB 234, to establish a different rate for the Kentucky River Parkway Commission consisting of several districts.
- HB 235, to establish a motor carrier residents of Ballard, Carlisle, Hickman and Fulton counties to be eligible for the motor carrier advisory board.
- HB 236, to allow weekly transportation for students attending the Kentucky School for the Blind or the Kentucky School for the Deaf.
- House Joint Resolution 8, to appoint Thomas D. Clark as historian laureate of Kentucky.
- House Concurrent Resolution 99, to urge the Federal Highway Administration to reinstate the truck division on Interstate 471 in northern Kentucky.

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Associated Press Writer  
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# General Assembly given larger role in setting project priorities

FRANKFORT, March 22 (AP) - The House Transportation Committee has narrowed passage of what would give the General Assembly more authority in setting road project priorities.

"We can finally have stability in the road plan with this bill," Representative Peter Worthington, D-Ewing, who is speaker pro tem of the Kentucky House of Representatives, said to members of the House committee.

He said the bill would give the General Assembly more authority in setting road project priorities.

But Transportation Mike Bryant said the bill could lead to unbridled legislative politicking over road construction.

Over the past session, one road project was switched to ward one legislator for support of the education reform bill and punishment for not voting against it.

"My concern about Senate Bill 200 altogether - that we will not be able to do what's right and build the roads where they are needed," he said. "I've tracked on the basis of votes," Bryant said.

In a hastily called meeting on the House Friday, the Transportation Committee approved an amended version of Senate Bill 200. The bill would give the House a larger role in setting road project priorities.

# Senate may move amendments

FRANKFORT, March 24 (AP) - The Senate likely will remove some of its amendments tacked on to the education reform package during the House's final review of the original bill last week.

The House revised several aspects of the original bill last week, making some changes that could cost the state an unknown amount of money.

"There's a couple of amendments in there that we can't afford," said Senate Education Committee Chairman Nelson Allen, D-Bellfonte.

Nelson's committee was to get first crack at the bill Monday, March 26.

Senate Majority Leader Joe Wright pointed out that the Senate would restore the bill to the House's original form.

Allen, who is a Democratic member of the House's Russell Independent Schools, said under an amendment that would require each elementary school to have a counselor. He said local schools should make that decision.

Allen said staff members also were researching the effect of amendments that would increase teacher salaries in each of the next two years and a measure that ensures at least 8 percent state funds increase in all districts for four years.

House members from relatively wealthy urban areas had argued that the 8 percent increases were needed so that even the richer districts would benefit from education reform.

"They are items that will be locked at \$100 million," Wright said. "After that, the Education Secretary's job will be to make sure that in two years the state will be locked at \$100 million short of the money needed to fully fund some key parts of the package."

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