



STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

Mick Zais
Superintendent

1429 Senate Street
Columbia, South Carolina 29201

June 26, 2013

The Honorable Hugh K. Leatherman, Sr.
Chairman, Senate Finance Committee

The Honorable W. Brian White
Chairman, House Ways and Means Committee

Chairman Leatherman and Chairman White:

Thank you for the opportunity to comment regarding gubernatorial vetoes of certain budget line items and provisos contained in the Fiscal Year 2013-2014 General Appropriations Bill.

Gubernatorial Vetoes

Veto #31 – Proviso 1.71

The House deleted this proviso at the request of the SCDE, but the Senate reinserted the proviso and insisted on its position during the budget conference committee. The House deserves credit for its stance to reduce the costs of operating a statewide school bus fleet.

Respectfully, I request Veto #31 be sustained.

Veto #65 – Proviso 1.80

This is a new proviso inserted by the Senate. It was not requested by the SCDE. This proviso is essentially an earmark for a Florida-based company called Beanstalk Innovation. The SCDE has a data system that has the capabilities required by the proviso; therefore, the proviso is unnecessary.

Respectfully, I request Veto #65 be sustained.

Veto #57 – Proviso 91.26

The language of the proviso directs the Education Oversight Committee (EOC) to, “review certain school districts’ central operations with a focus on non-instructional expenditures so as to identify opportunities to improve operational efficiencies and reduce costs for the district.”

The statutory missions of the EOC, found in Chapters 6 and 18 of Title 59, are approval of academic standards, approval of the statewide accountability assessment, implementation of school report cards and parent surveys, and recommendations regarding programs funded by EIA. The EOC has not historically and does not today play a role in evaluating school district operations. It simply isn't in their statutory authority or their agency's mission. Their agency staffing level suggests they cannot manage this workload.

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Furthermore, the proviso guts what is a core function of the EOC: evaluating academic progress. The proviso specifically states, "The review shall not address the effectiveness of the educational services being delivered by the district." I've long advocated for more efficient school operations because a dollar spent on administrative expenses is one less dollar spent on instructional expenses. Yet, this proviso mandates the EOC to ignore a school district's academic progress. If this proviso remains in the budget, and the contracted vendor finds severe academic malpractice in a school district, are they supposed to simply turn a blind eye? I would hope not.

There is no requirement for school districts to implement any recommendations offered by the external consultants who would conduct the reviews. Additionally, a review would only be available for 3 school districts. Why not grant the SCDE the authority to conduct these reviews, and the educational services at the same time, for all 82 school districts?

Respectfully, I request Veto #57 be sustained.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mick Zais". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line above the name.

Mick Zais, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Education

CC: The Honorable Nikki R. Haley, Governor
Members, South Carolina General Assembly