

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING
OF THE
ASSEMBLY COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION**

**Seventy-Third Session
April 27, 2005**

The Committee on Education was called to order at 3:50 p.m., on Wednesday, April 27, 2005. Chairwoman Bonnie Parnell presided in Room 3142 of the Legislative Building, Carson City, Nevada, and, via simultaneous videoconference, in Room 4406 of the Grant Sawyer State Office Building, Las Vegas, Nevada. [Exhibit A](#) is the Agenda. All exhibits are available and on file at the Research Library of the Legislative Counsel Bureau.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ms. Bonnie Parnell, Chairwoman
Mrs. Debbie Smith, Vice Chairwoman
Ms. Sharron Angle
Mr. Kelvin Atkinson
Mr. Joe Hardy
Mr. Brooks Holcomb
Mr. William Horne
Mr. Garn Mabey
Mr. Mark Manendo
Mr. Bob McCleary
Mr. Harvey J. Munford

COMMITTEE MEMBERS ABSENT:

None

GUEST LEGISLATORS PRESENT:

None

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Kristin Roberts, Principal Deputy Legislative Counsel
Carol Stonefield, Committee Policy Analyst
Rachel Pilliod, Committee Manager
Paul Partida, Committee Attaché

OTHERS PRESENT:

Steve George, Public Information Officer, Offices of the Secretary of State, State of Nevada

Judith F. Simpson, Project Director, Nevada Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools

Adnan Mrkva, Interpreter, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Rahela Dzidich, Executive Director, Civitas, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Ziyad Pashich, Minister, Federal Ministry of Education and Science, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Milovan Pecelyi, Minister of Education and Culture, Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Yozo Marich, Minister of Education, West Herzegovina Canton, Bosnia and Herzegovina

Marlene Lockard, Vice Chairman, Advisory Committee on Participatory Democracy (ACPD), Office of the Secretary of State, State of Nevada

David Byerman, Chairman, Advisory Committee on Participatory Democracy (ACPD), Office of the Secretary of State, State of Nevada

Cindy Sharp, K-12 Consultant, English Language/Fine Arts, Assessment, Program Accountability, and Curriculum, Department of Education, State of Nevada

Andrew Morss, Teacher, Spanish Springs Elementary School, Sparks, Nevada

Andrew Heilman, Communications/Events Coordinator, Nevada Commission for National and Community Service

Dr. Dotty Merrill, Assistant Superintendent, Washoe County School District (WCSD), Reno, Nevada

Gloria P. Dopf, Deputy Superintendent, Department of Education, State of Nevada

Chairwoman Parnell:

[Meeting called to order and roll called.] We are going to get started today with a presentation on Democracy Day. Here to present the presentation are representatives from the Secretary of State's office.

Steve George, Public Information Officer, Office of the Secretary of State, State of Nevada:

As you know in the last session, with S.B. 309 of the 72nd Legislative Session, you placed the Advisory Committee on Participatory Democracy (ACPD) under

the auspices of the Secretary of State. That bill had very specific goals. One of the major ones set by the Legislature was to have 70 percent voter participation in this state by 2008—and of those 70 percent, 75 percent of those people actually vote. In 2004, we had record turnout. We had record registration, but the percentage of voter registration was still only 64 percent, with a voter participation rate of 70 percent. Although that was a dynamic increase from 2000, we still have a ways to go to catch up to your stated goals.

[Steve George, continued.] The Advisory Committee on Participatory Democracy has met since April of 2004. We have quarterly meetings. One of our people here—our Chairman, David Byerman—will give you more information about that. Speaking for the Secretary of State, we are delighted that it is under our office. I serve as the Secretary's designee on that and on the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, which we feel are intertwined. The group is made up of dedicated volunteers who try to do as much as they can to make a difference in our community in many ways, certainly in voter participation.

I'm also here for the Secretary to say that the marriage of ACPD and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools is something that we feel will be a terrific tool for our students of the future. Young people tend not to vote. They tend not to get in the process. They think there is no reason for them to get involved. The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools, partnering with ACPD, is working to change that mindset, letting them understand how much better their society could be and how much more of a player they can be in that.

You all have a fact sheet ([Exhibit B](#)). I want to draw attention to the last statement in that: "By creating citizens who are more civilly engaged and aware, we can affect systemic change in our society in terms of community involvement, civility, empowerment, and voting participation."

We think that is very important. The ACPD and the Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools is not about getting more people to vote. It is about all of the issues that are intertwined in that to make them understand better what it is to be a Nevadan and how proud they should be to be an American and, through that, to increase voter participation.

Judith F. Simpson, Project Director, Nevada Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools:

About a year and a half ago, Assemblyman Horne and I had the privilege, with Mr. [Larry] Struve, of going to a meeting in Washington, D.C. to talk about the importance of helping our young people become active citizens. Apathy is death for a democracy. As a result of that meeting, the Carnegie Corporation was so excited about the enthusiasm of the leadership that was there, they put

together a multimillion dollar project to help support civic education in schools. They opened it up for grants. It was extraordinarily competitive. All 50 states applied. Nevada was one of six states to receive a \$150,000 two-year grant to promote civic education in schools.

[Judith Simpson, continued.] They are using the phrase “civic learning,” rather than “civic education.” They want all of us to understand that when you become a good citizen, it is more important that you know what happened in Article 2, Section 1 of the *Constitution*, which is just as important for you to understand why we have government and the purposes of government. They need that kind of a knowledge base, but you also need to have quite a broad skillset. You need to be a good reader and writer. You need to be able to ask questions. You need to be able to separate fact from opinion. These are the kinds of things which help make us be good citizens. Then, even more so, it takes a certain kind of attitude to be a good citizen. You have to believe in the rights of other people. You have to respect others. You have to be willing to let them express their opinion without putting it down, et cetera.

The Campaign for the Civic Mission of Schools is to encompass those three areas of knowledge, skills, and attitudes. That is what we are here to promote with you today. I have been part of this project for 20 years. Today is the culmination for Larry Struve, Dina Titus, and myself of 20 years of work, to have this drawn to the forefront of the State Legislature. Without your support—telling our educational system that it is important that we do teach our kids to be citizens—we are in trouble, to be honest with you. In the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), even though social studies is listed as one of the four core subjects, it is totally omitted from the testing and most other things. We don’t want it to happen. Let us figure out some way that we can put it all together.

The Coalition—which is how the CMS [Civic Mission of Schools] grant is put together—is going to do several major projects during this next year. Steve [George] is going to be in charge of the first ever statewide Civic Education Summit that is going to be held in Las Vegas in December. That will be totally paid for out of our grant. We hope that many of you will attend that, to hear of and see some of the things that being already done, to help us figure out how to get them in other classrooms, and to meet with other people that are really involved.

With the blessing of Assemblywoman Smith, we are going to look at the social studies standards. They are written now as completely separate subjects, and we will try to figure out ways to coalesce those together so that they don’t seem overwhelming to a third grade teacher who says, “I can’t teach history,

civics, economics, and geography, and I can barely teach the reading.” We are hoping that we can figure out how to put all of that together for them, to help them see how they can do that in their period of time.

[Judith Simpson, continued.] One of the most exciting things that has happened to me in my career is that I have been asked to work on a project in Bosnia and Herzegovina that is done by the State Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Education, funded by Congress, to help democratize educational systems in emerging democracies. Nevada, California, and Arizona were paired with Bosnia and Herzegovina. I have visited that country 17 times in the past 8 years. I have worked with them on a great number of projects. I’m extraordinarily proud today. All of this is being translated. I’m very honored to have you meet the delegation of the top government official ministers from Bosnia and Herzegovina to talk about what civic education has done in their country.

It is well believed now that as a result of the efforts of this project—called Civitas—they have the best civic education program in the world. They are here today because they said that we helped them get it started, and maybe if we come back and help you, you can catch on how to do it too.

Adnan Mrkva, Interpreter, Bosnia and Herzegovina:

I’ll be the translator today.

Rahela Dzidich, Executive Director, Civitas, Bosnia and Herzegovina:

[Handed out [Exhibit C](#).] We are here today to tell you how much we appreciate the work that has been achieved through our partnership with Arizona, Nevada, and California. In 1996, when the war was stopped, there was still no peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Brave educators from all of the United States came to our country to the first civic education program. A group of 30 teachers were trained to implement the program that is being used in schools around the United States and now in more than 40 countries of emerging democracies. It’s called Project Citizen. Since that day—and Judy was one of the pioneers of this program—through the exchange program, we were able to train more than 21,000 teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina and donate more than 500,000 civic education books.

It is a very divided country, where we have two entities—Federation and Republika Srpska—and 10 cantons. Today we have a representative of only one canton. All of these entities have different education systems. Despite this, civic education remains now, nine years after the war. There is a joint curriculum, joint textbooks, and a joint program. We do joint teacher trainings. It is a great success. It would not have been possible without our dear friends from the

United States and especially from our partnership. Judy was our teacher and is our friend. We are very grateful for that friendship.

[Rahela Dzidich, continued.] We can also testify from our personal experience—myself, as a mother, and Minister Marich, as a father of children who participated in the project. They get not only involved in their community—my son is now five years out of high school, and he is still very engaged—but also receiving their gains in academic knowledge. They become better students in other areas. There is no real threat, if we put emphasis on civic education, that we will lose in math, physics, reading, writing, and whatever is being tested on in your schools. There really is a lot of research to show that they show better academic results, because the atmosphere in their classroom is conducive to academic achievements.

Without further delay, I will give the floor to our esteemed colleagues and would like once again to thank you for all of your help. We hope that this partnership will continue to flourish for many years to come.

Chairwoman Parnell:

Congratulations on all of the successes. That is very impressive. We probably do have some things to learn from you.

Ziyad Pashich, Minister, Federal Ministry of Education and Science, Bosnia and Herzegovina:

[Spoke through Adnan Mrkva, translator.] Members of the Assembly and dear friends, I want to thank you all for everything you did for students and teachers in Bosnia and Herzegovina. I know the people from Bosnia and Herzegovina have a vision of building democracy for everybody, and the civil rights program that was introduced by the Civitas program of civic education has brought great results to students in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We hope that, together with you, we will continue to do for the best of kids and students in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I am proud to say that I'm coming from the second-largest city in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Tuzla. We do have a statue of Martin Luther King in front of our city hall.

Milovan Pecelyi, Minister of Education and Culture, Republika Srpska, Bosnia and Herzegovina:

[Spoke through Adnan Mrkva, translator.] The Republika Srpska is an entity in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has over 400 schools and 2 universities. Our country is placed in the Balkans, where democracy was born in neighboring Greece. It was progressing sometimes at bad and good times, but it was always

the idea of the Balkan people. Unfortunately, in the last decade, we weren't lucky enough to enjoy it. That is why we came here, to see how you organized your democracy here in Nevada and the United States of America. We want to bring the proudness of democracy to our country.

[Milovan Pecelyi, continued.] Some months ago, I was a dean of a university of philosophy. Five years ago, I had established a program of civic education at my university. That became curriculum, and it is there for the civic education. So today, as a Minister of Education and Culture, I want to do everything in my power to bring this to other schools and organizations in my entity, which will be positive for progress among our people. It will make young people want to stay in Bosnia and Herzegovina and integrate into the modern society. We had the honor to meet Ms. Judy Simpson here, and Ms. Simpson had the chance to visit us in Bosnia, and we hope that she will come back to Bosnia again.

Ms. Rahela Dzidich is the coordinator for Bosnia and Herzegovina, and she is the director of Civitas for Bosnia and Herzegovina. We will do everything for democracy to take place in Bosnia and Herzegovina. We want to bring smiles to the faces of our people, especially our kids. We don't think there is a price for that.

Yozo Marich, Minister of Education, West Herzegovina Canton, Bosnia and Herzegovina:

[Spoke through Adnan Mrkva, translator.] I come here to your state, which has a similar climate to the region where I come from. I enjoyed this morning rain, and I hope you enjoyed it too. I hope for rain in my region, because land in my country needs water as well.

We are here to talk about the children. We talk about their wish for knowledge. We also talk about how to relate the real information to our kids and also how to teach that kid to communicate with that information. The subjects of democracy and human rights are subjects that are needed to teach kids what is good for the future. I was in education, a professor of history, in Bosnia and Herzegovina for 17 years, which is just as many times as Judy Simpson had visited Bosnia and Herzegovina.

I'm a real witness of the old system that was ruining Bosnia. It was a communist system. Now, we have enjoyed this democracy and the human rise. I'm a real witness of progress. I also supported this project when I was the governor of the West Herzegovina Canton some years ago. Today, as a Minister of Education in my canton, I have the power to actually teach my colleagues and people that work around me of the benefits that we have from this program of civic education. All the time, we have the help and support from

Ms. Judy Simpson. You must be proud of Judy Simpson as a citizen of Nevada and everything she did for us. We hope that she will do this for you as well.

Assemblyman Holcomb:

Can you give us a little bit of the background of your region in the last 10 years? What has happened militarily, and how that has impacted civic education responsibility or interest in civic education?

Rahela Dzdich:

In the 1990s, the first democratic elections were held in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which brought ethnic parties—very nationalistic parties—in place. The war broke off and the country was divided into two entities and 10 cantons. The two entities are the Republika Srpska, which is very centralized, and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, populated mainly by Serbs. This is because other people were told to leave that region and the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, which is divided into 10 cantons. Each canton has either a Bosnian or Croat majority. There are basically three education systems. They are very ethnic oriented.

Assemblyman Holcomb:

I was wondering, because of the dispute in your country. Now, people are interested and take pride in their country, and they are really interested in civic education?

Ziyad Pashich:

[Answered through Adnan Mrkva, interpreter.] I can proudly say that after everything that happened in Bosnia and Herzegovina in the past, it is now getting better and we are seeing some progress. Of course, without the help of others—especially the help of the United States—we don't think that we could have succeeded. Believe me, for our system of education, this project had very great importance. With this project, we are calling on our kids to better their futures with tolerance, democracy, and a better tomorrow. What we have done so far, with this project, we cannot put a price on that. We know it is going to be even better in the future.

Assemblyman Horne:

What was the level of reluctance, at first, to get the three different educational systems to come together and work together in civic education? How far have you come? How far do you anticipate going?

Yozo Marich:

[Answered through Adnan Mrkva, interpreter.] We, in Bosnia and Herzegovina until the war in 1992, had one program for the whole country. During 1992

through 1995—the war in Bosnia—the system actually split into three different ethnic sections. What is different from the one before, which was the socialist and communist, is that now we have a more ethnic focus on our programs. It led to convergence of these three different systems.

[Yozo Marich, continued.] Right after the war, we had help from the international community to bring this back together through our school programs. Today, we still have three different programs in our schools. We have the Bosnian program, the Serb program, and the Croat program. Their only differences are in the group of subjects with a national accent, like our geography, history, art, and language. Now, we again are trying to step forward and bring these closer together—so that our children, with ease, can move from one program to another one. We stopped with the lecture of our kids that could actually bring shame to other ethnic groups.

This great project of civic education is there to bring all of this together. This will bring, for sure, progress in the future. Civic education is what helped us bring this together.

Assemblyman Munford:

You mentioned at the beginning that you had a statue of Martin Luther King somewhere. Is the nation now all three nations put together? Are you still Yugoslavia, or are you not Yugoslavia any longer? You said three separate nations; is that correct? At one time you were all Yugoslavia, and when Tito went down, you split and things happened?

Judith Simpson:

Yugoslavia only exists as Serbia and Montenegro right now. Bosnia and Herzegovina is a separate country that consists of the three ethnic groups living together. Croatia, Slovenia, and Macedonia have all split off into being their own countries. They are all from the same country of Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Assemblyman Munford:

I know what Martin Luther King stands for, as far as I'm concerned. What influenced you and what led you to picking Martin Luther King to be a symbol in your country during your strive for democracy? I know why I would choose it, but I wonder why you would.

Ziyad Pashich:

[Answered through Adnan Mrkva, interpreter.] I come from the city of Tuzla, like I said, and we did not have ethnic tendency. Our city was coming together, and we had an idea to put the statue of Martin Luther King—the great

American, who was the great civil leader—and put him in front of our city hall, to be there and to remind us of that.

Assemblyman Munford:

Of a struggle, so to speak, of what you have to do to achieve.

Ziyad Pashich:

[Answered through Adnan Mrkva, interpreter.] Yes. That is why we have it there; it is to remind us of our struggle.

Assemblyman Munford:

What about the three religious groups that you have? You have the Catholics, the Muslims, and the Greek Orthodox. How does the religion work out? Are the tolerations there for religion, or is there a problem with that?

Milovan Pecelyi:

[Answered through Adnan Mrkva, interpreter.] We have three religions that live in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Those are the three different civilizations. They have lived together for centuries in Bosnia, and they put their stamp on Bosnia and Herzegovina. All of them will stay there forever.

Yozo Marich:

[Answered through Adnan Mrkva, interpreter.] The religious groups in Bosnia and their leaders actually went one step further, and they organized the coalition between those three religions. They have a kind of body that works together on all of the religious issues in Bosnia.

Judith Simpson:

I need to tell you that one of the things I should be praised for today is senility. I didn't say the whole important reason that I'm here today to you. You have in front of you a report ([Exhibit D](#)) from Dr. Keith Rheault that was based on very hard work that was put in by a committee that was formed because of S.B. 309 of the 72nd Legislative Session. One of the requirements was to survey all schools in Nevada about the status of civic education. Once we got the results of that survey, we were to make recommendations to the Legislature in a report, which Dr. Rheault put together to be sent to you. One of the things that we found out was that some of the principals didn't know exactly what their teachers were covering in their classrooms.

We surveyed both principals and teachers. We found out that because of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB), particularly in the elementary schools, social studies is being lost in the shuffle. One of the things that we really believe, when we made our recommendations, the highest priority we have is—

representing every group here—that there be a social studies coordinator position for the State Department of Education. Marlene Lockard has some of that data. I've asked her if she'd come up and tell you a little bit about the factual part of it.

Marlene Lockard, Vice Chairman, Advisory Committee on Participatory Democracy (ACPD), Office of the Secretary of State, State of Nevada:

I'm here to explain that we fully understand that a position request and the money request is not the purview of this Committee, although Mrs. Smith does sit on Ways and Means. The position that we are requesting was requested by the Department of Education (NDOE) but not recommended by the Governor. We are simply asking that a certain decision module that supports one position be restored to the NDOE budget. I will make the specific budget number and decision module available to the Committee members. If you feel so inclined to write a letter of support to that Committee to restore the NDOE's request for this coordinator, we would be very grateful.

David Byerman, Chairman, Advisory Committee on Participatory Democracy (ACPD), Office of the Secretary of State, State of Nevada:

What you have seen today is the culmination of several years of work, extending from S.B. 309 of the 72nd Legislative Session and the work that has been done across the state to promote participation in civic government and civic education in our schools. The ACPD is comprised of 10 citizen volunteers from throughout the state—five from northern Nevada and five from southern Nevada. We have folks from the rural parts of the state and urban parts. We have folks from different states and different countries working together to identify innovative programs that are really helping to improve the health of our democracy throughout the state.

Senate Bill 309 of the 72nd Legislative Session, as you might remember, reorganized the ACPD to place it under the Secretary of State's office. As Steve George indicated to you today, that has been a very good development for everyone here. We all believe that we are much more productive. We are about to move into a different phase, as a committee, by getting involved in the decision making about how HAVA [Help America Vote Act of 2002] funding is actually spent within the State of Nevada.

If you have ideas or programs in mind that would merit attention from our committee or from the Secretary of State's office, the members of the ACPD are in place, and they are here to listen to you and to get your feedback on how we should proceed. We had one major charge—in terms of our legislative business from S.B. 309 of the 72nd Legislative Session—and that was the recognition of outstanding people throughout the State of Nevada with the

Jean Ford Democracy Award. I believe all of you were on the Floor of the Assembly and Senate this morning. We recognized Larry Struve and Mark Peplowski, respectively, as the outstanding citizen and educator, statewide, for the state of Nevada.

[David Byerman, continued.] I want to conclude today by pointing out that there is a certain irony in having a delegation from Bosnia and Herzegovina come here to our country to extol on the virtues of civic education. To be honest with you, I was taken aback at lunch today, when one of the representatives from Bosnia indicated that he was very surprised that we did not have as much of an emphasis on civic education as they have in Bosnia. Somehow, in some way, our democracy has thrived despite that lack of civic education. I believe that is a relatively recent development. We haven't had that lack of interest or commitment to civic education until this past decade or two.

We are here today asking for a restoration of this FTE [full-time equivalent] to be a consultant to the State Department of Education. We are asking for this Legislature—and the citizens of Nevada by extension—to rededicate themselves to civic education and to the effect that has—not only on the knowledge of our students about government or history, but also on their commitment to good citizenship, to being good citizens within their schools, to being able to communicate effectively with their peers, and to being able to understand how all of the different things that they learn throughout the curriculum all fit together in support of our system of government. The ACPD remains committed to improve the health of our democracy here in Nevada.

Chairwoman Parnell:

Thank you so much for all that you are doing in this area. As I said today on the Floor, it is one that I am very passionate about. I actually spoke to Ways and Means yesterday and mentioned the same concern, with the onset of NCLB. I used to do presidential campaigns every four years. I fear that we have taken time away from that. We don't have the luxury of having fun with that. I think that is how it needs to be taught. Hopefully, we can make sure that we are covered. It's incredibly important.

Cindy Sharp, K-12 Consultant, English Language/Fine Arts, Assessment, Program Accountability, and Curriculum, Department of Education, State of Nevada:

Part of my assignments is social studies. I spend as much time as I can with the social studies curriculum and the standards. Because I primarily do reading, it means I'm doing the reading curriculum and all of the testing that goes along with that. I'm here to endorse and say that I would love to have you guys send a letter that would put a social studies consultant into the Department of

Education. I would be very sad, because I wouldn't be working with social studies directly anymore, but I would be more than happy to work with the person who would be in that position.

[Cindy Sharp, continued.] I just attended a conference this weekend, which talked about the importance of content reading and content education. Where better to do that than at the high school level in a social studies classroom? I'd like to endorse that and get people thinking about it. Social studies is such a great place. I taught social studies for 20 years, and it is just so much fun. I hate to think that kids aren't going to have the kind of delight and things that we had happen. I want to let you know that I'm doing it, but I'm only doing it when I have time. You all know what the testing is like, so you can imagine what kind of time I have for that. I'd like to encourage you to make it so that we can have somebody do this full time.

Andrew Morss, Teacher, Spanish Springs Elementary School, Sparks, Nevada:
[Spoke from prepared bullet points, [Exhibit E.](#)]

I'm also here to advocate for the position of a social studies consultant. Classroom teachers are under a tremendous amount of pressure, and in some cases being told not to teach social studies in favor of math and reading. Our students must have the essential skills of reading and math. However, we dare not lose sight of the purpose of those skills—to become thoughtful, responsible, and productive citizens; social studies is the big picture—how we function and interact as a community, state, and nation. In my fifth grade class, I teach a civics education program called "We the People." This program is cross-curricular and incorporates language arts standards and math standards.

In a real, meaningful, and personal way for my fifth graders, they get to learn about the philosophy and purpose of our government. They learn to create a reasoned argument. They learn the importance of promoting the common good and teaching civic virtue. They can't wait until they turn 18 years old to vote. My students, of all ability levels, become energized and enthusiastic about being American citizens. The greatest thing about the program is that in the classroom, their attitude about their learning, helping each other, and about participating in our classroom dramatically improves because of civic education.

They start watching the news, reading the newspaper, and having conversations with their parents about their rights, civics, and their

government. They can talk about John Locke, social contracts, natural rights, and Supreme Court cases, and they are only 10 and 11 years old. I would ask you to please elevate social studies education to the critical status it deserves. The future of our state and nation depend upon it.

Andrew Heilman, Communications/Events Coordinator, Nevada Commission for National and Community Service:

Both myself and my organization are incredibly proud to be part of the ACPD, as well as the Civic Mission of Schools (CMS) grant. We believe that they both tie in strongly to our idea of increasing volunteerism and civic engagement—these two committees fitting very well into our mission. I would like to ask as well that you support the implementation of a social studies coordinator. I think one thing incredibly interesting about this group of people is that among all of us who sit on the CMS grant coalition, we represent 28 different organizations, schools, nonprofits, government agencies, and so on.

I know a lot of us believe very strongly in a variety of methods for civic engagement for creating that. I think a social studies coordinator at the Department of Education level would allow all of us who have proven methodologies and proven programs that work to get into the schools much easier. A lot of us have programs that work incredibly well. We have the tools that we can give to teachers. Having a social studies coordinator would allow us to do that. It would allow us to literally give our resources, time, and energy to them and make their job a little bit easier. I ask that you support the implementation of the position of the social studies coordinator.

Chairwoman Parnell:

We will take this up in a work session. I hope that this is one that I might be able to be a little bit persuasive.

Assemblywoman Smith:

As the chairperson of the Council to Establish Academic Standards, it is our assignment to work on the standards. The social studies standards will be up for review before we know it. It is amazing how quickly the time is moving on this. It would be so helpful to have a social studies coordinator. It is a big assignment for the Department staff to try to pool all of that together. We have multiple writing teams that come together to work on the standards. They are made up of teachers, university participants, business people, and parents. It takes a lot of work, proofing, researching, and pooling everything together—getting the teams together and spending days on end together. The Academic Standards Council has an official position supporting that social studies

consultant. I would certainly hope that this Committee would encourage my Ways and Means Committee to do that.

Assemblyman Munford:

I know—having taught social studies and U.S. government for quite some time—we tried, in U.S. government, to promote civic-minded thinking, participating in the democratic process of voting, and that type of thing. I always used to try to make them interested in government, because they always thought it was boring and didn't like it sometimes. It was always the last social studies class that they had to take before they graduated.

I would list some things on the board. I would say that about 80 percent of your life and daily existence when you walk out your door is involved with government. I said that you couldn't even drive your car without the government. You can't sit in those seats without the government. I gave them all kinds of examples. They become a little bit more interested. It is a sort of orientation speech that I gave them at the beginning of the year. They became a little bit more alert. Many seniors worked, and I asked if they had looked at their paycheck lately. I told them to look at the stub on the back.

I said that the government is all on the back of it, that they get the money before you even get it. They become a little bit more alert and more connected. I can get it going a little bit. I found that to be very helpful. I thought current events were important too; show them what is happening, how it is connected, and all those types of things. I used to have a week of current events. We'd have the newspaper there and they'd do research, read, and reports. Government is cool.

Chairwoman Parnell:

At this time, I will open the hearing on S.B. 202.

Senate Bill 202: Revises manner in which school districts schedule contingent school days. (BDR 34-1111)

Dr. Dotty Merrill, Assistant Superintendent, Washoe County School District (WCSD), Reno, Nevada:

Those of you who live in the northern part of the state experienced, along with those of us who live in Washoe County, a lot of snow, followed by more snow at the end of December and January. As a result of all of that snow and the timing connected with when the snow fell, the WCSD cancelled its classes in response to concerns about student safety and transportation. When we

proposed to the State a way for those classes and those school days to be made up, we learned that the Superintendent of Public Instruction really only had one solution open to him. That was to tell us that we needed to use what are called "contingency days," which are built into the end of the school year.

[Dotty Merrill, continued and handed out the bill summary, [Exhibit F.](#)] Our proposal, by contrast, was to add time to the school day, beginning on January 21 and going to the end of the school year. This is so that we would have the opportunity not only to make up the time that our students had missed, but to make it up before the State-mandated Criterion Reference Test (CRT), which are used for purposes of Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) and our school designations. When we learned that Dr. Rheault did not have any wiggle room within the existing statutes or regulations to accommodate our request, Senator Raggio brought forward [S.B. 202](#) on behalf of our district and, more importantly, on behalf of all districts in the state. This bill is to allow the Superintendent of Public Instruction the discretion to approve a proposal from school districts to make up missed instruction by adding time to the school day or, alternatively, by using the existing contingency days, which is already in the statute.

We are grateful to the Senator for moving this forward, and we certainly encourage your positive consideration of the proposal. Had it been in effect, Superintendent Rheault would have been able to grant our proposal to add time to the school day in order to make up that missed instruction.

Gloria P. Dopf, Deputy Superintendent, Department of Education, State of Nevada:

The Department of Education has worked with Washoe County School District and the other constituents on this bill. We are very much in support of the flexibility given for the utilization of the contingent days or the adding-in of the contingent minutes. The point about getting additional instruction before the AYP and before the CRT assessment is a critical one. Dr. Rheault had indicated that, had he had the flexibility, he would have granted the proposal that WCSD had put forward. It does make a lot of sense to have more instruction in the front end. We are very much in support of the bill, and we favor the flexibility to the school districts in creating contingencies of days and/or combinations of minutes. We would support that.

Assemblywoman Smith:

Dotty, did this have anything to do with the complaint that we had from the kids in Sparks High School that had to take the test—the proficiency—right with spring break? Did what happened with the snow days push that at all, or was that another situation?

Dotty Merrill:

The situation that you are referring to is a different kind of situation. It was based upon the unfortunate conjunction of spring break, which was not related to the number of days for the proficiency exam.

Assemblyman Holcomb:

What is the purpose of this? Is it shown that eliminating three days and having a little longer school day is a more effective educational tool? What brought up adding on rather than the three additional? In fact, I asked my wife about when she would be getting out. She told me that there were three additional days they were adding on.

Dotty Merrill:

It is the intention that is critical in answering such a question. Our intention with the proposal that we made was to provide additional instruction and make up the time prior to the administration of the CRTs. Simply making up the time, had we only had that single intention, we could have used the existing contingency days. But, we sought to maximize our remaining instructional opportunities with our students by adding the additional minutes. Unfortunately, Dr. Rheault could not approve that, given the existing statute. Our intention was twofold; make up the time and provide instruction prior to the administration of the CRTs. Our teachers thought that was critical.

Gloria Dopf:

The other thing that I wanted to bring forth relative to this is that this is a low incidence occurrence. The circumstance, for the most part, is that the districts can follow their school day calendar of 180 days as scheduled. What happened this year was the weather. This statute is only in place when we have circumstances of natural disaster, weather, or other unforeseen circumstances where there are missing days, due to the inability to have school because of those kind of catastrophes or weather circumstances.

In the past eight or nine years, we have only had this in a handful of school calendars where we've even had to consider the contingency days, let alone how we would then make up for them, for low incidence circumstances due to acts of God or other circumstances, natural disasters, et cetera. Given the now-heightened emphasis on the instruction, standards, and the assessment of the standards through the CRTs, it became very apparent that it would be beneficial to be able to plug in additional time before the test cycle, rather than additional days at the end of the year, which has been the traditional pattern.

Chairwoman Parnell:

We appreciate the fact that you want to take a look at letting those kids make up that time before the end of the year.

ASSEMBLYMAN HORNE MOVED TO DO PASS SENATE BILL 202.

ASSEMBLYWOMAN SMITH SECONDED THE MOTION.

THE MOTION CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY.

Chairwoman Parnell:

Is there additional business to come before this Committee this afternoon?
Seeing none, this meeting is adjourned [at 5:01 p.m.].

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Paul Partida
Committee Attaché

APPROVED BY:

Assemblywoman Bonnie Parnell, Chairwoman

DATE: _____

EXHIBITS

Committee Name: Committee on Education

Date: April 27, 2005

Time of Meeting: 3:50 p.m.

Bill	Exhibit	Witness / Agency	Description
	A	*****	Agenda
	B	Steve George / Secretary of State's Office, State of Nevada	Fact sheet
	C	Rahela Dzidich / Civitas	Education structure
	D	Judy Simpson / CMS	Report
	E	Andrew Morss / Spanish Springs Elementary School	Bullet points
SB 202	F	Dotty Merrill / WCSD	Bill summary