

March 10, 2010

Senate Bill 6:

This fight over Senate Bill 6 is really about politics and politicians; we keep trying to make sense out of it, fight it with reality, and explain the truth. But, the people in power in the Senate don't care. This bill was sponsored by ALL of the Senate Republicans on the Senate Pre K-12 Education Committee—that includes Chair Detert (Sarasota), Constantine (Altamonte Springs), Gaetz (Destin), Storms (Tampa), Thrasher (Jacksonville), and Wise (Jacksonville).

We have been told this bill is the priority of Senate President Atwater (Palm Beach). The rumor in Tallahassee is that this was the "pay-off" for Jeb's endorsement in his race for CFO. In our meetings with Republican leaders in the Senate we have been told that if we would change our position on class size, this bill would go away.

Senate Bill 6 passed along party lines with Senators Wilson (Miami-Dade) and Bullard (Miami-Dade) voting against the bill. The bill was scheduled for 1.5 hours of presentation, discussion, testimony, and debate. Senator Detert asked everyone to be professional and respectable and most were. She did not allow the senators to question the public in testimony—very unusual.

Terrie Brady, DTU, testified about the real progress in Jacksonville and the wonderful collaborative relationship she has with the superintendent and school board. She made sure they heard about the right way to go about improving schools.

I testified as well. I urged the committee to scrap the bill and let's sit down in a collaborative way to try and solve the real problems they want addressed—because there is so much in this bill it is hard to really find what they are trying to "fix". I informed them that this bill guts local control, raises property taxes, and contains unfunded mandates (certainly not Republican Party views and remember the bill sponsor is the Chair of the party). This bill will look "good" in a piece of campaign literature; bash the teacher! At least that is what I think is behind this--Jeb has had it in for us for years.

The School Boards Association and the Superintendents also opposed the bill for many of the same reasons we spoke against it.

The next stop for this bill in the Senate is Ways and Means—

Republicans: Alexander (Polk), Altman (Melbourne), Baker (Lake), Bennett (Manatee), Crist (Tampa), Fasano (Pasco), Gaetz (Destin), Garcia (Miami-Dade), Haridopolos (Brevard), Lynn (Volusia), Negron (St. Lucie/Palm

Beach), Peaden (Crestview), Thrasher (Jacksonville), Villalobos (Miami-Dade), Wise (Jacksonville) Democrats: Deutch (Palm Beach), Gelber (Miami-Dade), Hill (Jacksonville), Justice (Pinellas), Lawson (Tallahassee), Rich (Broward), Siplin (Orlando), Sobel (Broward), Wilson (Miami-Dade).

Media campaign: Tallahassee Democrat (local paper) full page ad on the effects of SB 6. News Conference last Monday—all major media outlets attended and widespread coverage. The Conference was on SB 6. Digital billboards are up in several targeted cities—being digital will allow us to change the message during the buy. TV commercial began running today in targeted cities—two rolling versions—class size and SB6.

RTTT: Wednesday morning I had another meeting with the Commissioner. The Commissioner was really putting on the pressure for me to attend the meeting next Tuesday in DC where the DOE will make an oral presentation of the Florida RTTT Grant application. I said I haven't seen anything change and had no desire to attend a meeting where we were not truly involved in a collaborative manner.

**Andy Ford, President
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