

School Employees Health Care Board Holds First Meeting

In their organizational meeting the School Employees Health Care Board heard from Ann Aquillo, Gov. Taft's deputy chief of staff, and Rick Frank, Department of Administrative Services (DAS) assistant director. Discussion centered on the role of the advisory committee, DAS, timelines, data collection and initial meeting dates.

While admitting that the board's first meeting was overdue because of late board nominations by the House, Senate and governor, the board was presented with its first revelation. The budget bill, **HB66**, allocated \$1.2 million for FY06 (which ends in June) to be used for the board's business. They were told that even though they are late getting started -- through no fault of their own -- they will not be able to carry any unused portion of the \$1.2 million over to FY07 which has a \$1.5 million allocation in the budget. In order to carry over any FY06 funds, the General Assembly will have to act.

DAS was allowed, through **HB66**, to hire staff. They hired Watson Wyatt consultants through an unbid contract which was approved by the Controlling Board. Frank told the board that they were able to hire their own consultants if they desired.

The Watson Wyatt representative told the board of their plans to distribute a survey to all school districts to collect data on existing insurance plans, to identify existing consortia, etc. It became apparent that board members were concerned about the statutory timeline created in **HB66**.

Across the hall in the Riffe Center where the board meeting took place, the "Hands Off Our Health Care Coalition" held a press conference. They released a letter written to each board member expressing their "sincere concern over the effort to impose a mandatory health care plan on all public employees in the state of Ohio."

The letter continued, "We are deeply troubled by several events:

- The failure of the governor, Senate president and speaker of the House to appoint the members of this board in a timely fashion in accordance with the law, thus depriving the board of the legal authority to do its work;
- The usurpation by the Taft administration of the authority granted to this board by giving a no-bid contract to Watson Wyatt consultants to design this health care plan -- a contract that was to have been awarded by this board after its own consideration of the matter.
- The complete avoidance of any well-designed, independent, and reliable study of the feasibility and true costs of such a mandated health care plan, despite the fact that this was the precise recommendation of the governor's own Blue Ribbon Task Force on School Funding."

The board members are:

Governors' appointments

- Louis Goorey, Worthington, a former consultant and medical director for UnitedHealthcare.

- Stephen Loeb, Upper Arlington, a professor emeritus with the Division of Health Services Management and Policy at OSU.
- Reed Fraley, Granville, a senior vice president of the Ohio Hospital Association.

House appointments

- Chris Mohr, Dublin, treasurer and executive director of business affairs for Dublin City Schools.
- Steve Clark, treasurer of Kettering City Schools.
- Anthony D'Ambrosio, former superintendent of the Trumbull County Education Service Center.

Senate appointments

- M. Scott Nisley, Athens, member of Athens City School District Board of Education and the Tri-county Joint Vocational School Board. He is president of Hocking Valley Bank.
- John R. Wahle, Cincinnati, is chief financial officer for the Great Oaks Institute of Technology and Career Development. He formerly served as interim treasurer for Lockland City Schools, Loveland City Schools and Mt. Healthy City Schools.
- Larry Morgan, Canton, is superintendent of both the Stark County Educational Services Center and R.G. Drage Career Education Center.