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OHIO CONSTITUTIONAL MODERNIZATION COMMISSION

EDUCATION, PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS, & MISCELLANEOUS AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE
CHAD A. READLER, CHAIR
THURSDAY, MARCH 13, 2014

Chairman Readler called the meeting of the Ohio Constitutional Modernization Subcommittee on Education, Public Institutions, and Miscellaneous & Local Government to order at 10:30 am and asked the clerk to call the roll. A quorum was not present.

Chair Readler proposed that the committee have a general business meeting to discuss the agenda and schedule for upcoming meetings and layout the priorities for the subcommittee. Two handouts were given to committee members to review. The first was a copy of a section of an article from the Michigan State Constitution and the second was a proposal given by Bill Phylis to address the issue of Education reform.

Governor Taft suggested it would be helpful to hear from major associations that represent the different types of local government in Ohio to see if there are changes to the constitution that they would propose. Chair Readler agreed and said that we would like to work through Article 6 and education first and then turn to Local Government topics later in the year.

Senator Bill Coley commented that technology has changed the concept of education and that the committee should look at the constitution to see if we need to focus on the education of individuals or on the reform of governmental institutions. Chair Readler agreed mentioning that some of the language in this section of the constitution has been around for over 100 years.

Dr. Larry Macon enquired about the Michigan constitution piece that was so distinguished compared to Ohio. Chair Readler referred to Article 8 Section 2 of the Michigan constitution and the subject of the appropriateness of leaving the decisions in the hands of judges or the hands of legislators. Policy decisions should not be made in the court. The lack of compliance with the DeRolph v. State of Ohio case was also mentioned.

Senator Coley share his desire to make sure to build in the flexibility for districts to make these decisions for themselves; he cited the city of Cincinnati and the creation of their own charter schools.

Chair Readler reiterated the point that we should ensure that the constitution is keeping up with the evolution that has occurred in our school districts and the different types of schools that there are in Ohio.

Dr. Macon added that he believes it is necessary to include wording about discrimination in order to emphasize the equability of our education system in the amendment. Chair Readler felt that how we do this should be left to policy makers.

Governor Taft asked the committee if they find any provisions of the education section of the constitution to be obsolete or outdated.

Chair Readler responded that he didn't think there were any provisions that everyone would agree to be obsolete. He mentioned that he feels Section 4 of Article 6 which refers to the State Board of Education and the order for selecting members should be changed. He also proposed a change regarding early childhood education, and the constitutional right to early childhood education.

County Commissioner Paula Brooks had a clarifying question about the early childhood proposal in the handout and wanted to make sure to talk about the funding component for this if we are going to make it a requirement per the constitution.

Chair Readler then encouraged formal proposals to be submitted so that the committee can start talking about these issues in further detail and conduct hearings.

Governor Taft commented on the growing consensus and support for more opportunity for early childhood education, and that the debate lies on whether or not to provide funding for all children or just low income children. If the committee does move towards an amendment he feels that it should at least allow for state funding of early childhood education but does not require it.

Senator Coley noted that the problem is the distribution system and if we are still looking at education as buildings and structures then we need to rethink the way we distribute the funds.

Governor Taft noted that the language in the constitution can have unintended consequences and there is always the danger of how the court will interpret the language.

Chair Readler suggested that the committee work with current language to modernize it and again encouraged the submission of formal proposals.

Commissioner Brooks offered to collaborate with Governor Taft to work on the early childhood education piece.

Chair Readler reemphasized that during this calendar year we need to be committed to the education portion of the constitution.

Commissioner Brooks expressed her concern about the workforce of tomorrow and how our current education system is structured to meet the needs of the employers. She suggested that the committee takes time to hear from the business committee so that they have the opportunity to give their input.

At this point a quorum had been met but not all members were physically in their seats in order to approve the minutes from the December meeting. Chair Readler moved for the meeting to adjourn at 11:00 am.



Chad Readler, Chair



Edward Gilbert, Vice Chair