

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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OFFICE OF
THE GOVERNOR

NO. 1 FY 92/93
DATE July 8, 1992

AN ORDER ESTABLISHING A TASK FORCE TO PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS
REGARDING SCHOOL FUNDING ISSUES

WHEREAS, the education of Maine students is among the highest priorities of state and local government; and

WHEREAS, between FY 80 and FY 90 total spending on general purpose aid for education by the state rose from \$183.4 million to \$475.5 million; and

WHEREAS, spending for K-12 education at the local level rose from \$364.5 million to \$939.1 million over this same period; and

WHEREAS, over the past two years Maine and the Nation have been caught in a severe economic recession; and

WHEREAS, the resultant decline in state revenues has forced the restriction of general purpose aid to \$523.2 million in FY 1991 and \$512.9 million in 1992; and

WHEREAS, the current economic down-turn has also produced unusual pressures on local governments and on local property taxpayers; and

WHEREAS, the reliance of the current school funding formula (20-A M.R.S.A. Chapter 606) upon the assessed value of local property is perceived by many to have placed an undue burden on certain sectors of the state; and

WHEREAS, a strong consensus continues to require a school funding formula that is designed to assure an equitable distribution of the property taxpayer burden throughout the state; and

WHEREAS, the allocation of the general purpose aid appropriations in the past two years have required a significant departure from the "certified funding level" and from the standard allocation mechanism of the current formula; and

WHEREAS, a strong consensus continues to require a school funding formula designed to achieve equity, with the fundamental recognition that the educational opportunities available to Maine children should not be determined by family wealth or by the wealth of the community;

NOW THEREFORE, I, John R. McKernan, Jr., Governor of the State of Maine, do hereby establish a Task Force To Provide Recommendations Regarding The School Funding Formula as follows:

Purpose

The purpose of the Task Force to Provide Recommendations Regarding The School Funding Formula is to consider the current issues regarding school funding in Maine and to suggest resolutions for these issues, particularly in the form of a new mechanism for the allocation of state resources to local school districts. In developing its recommendations, the Task Force should seek and consider public input and aim towards the development of a mechanism which is likely to have the support of the majority of the Maine citizens and their elected representatives.

The responsibilities of the committee shall be:

1. To consider the elements of the "recommended funding level," and to determine what factors should be considered in setting the total statewide appropriation for educational subsidies;
2. Consider the mechanisms necessary to adapt the recommended funding level to the amount actually appropriated by the Legislature and approved by the Governor for each budget year;
3. To consider how pupil educational needs and unit-wide educational needs should be measured, and how the total allocation of funds for school units should be calculated to equitably reflect these needs;
4. To consider the fiscal capacity of each school administrative unit and to develop a method of measuring the fiscal capacity for the purpose of the equitable allocation of resources in any school funding formula recommended by the Task Force;
5. To consider what incentives for local unit performance, size, and efficiency should be incorporated into the new school funding formula;
6. To consider the relationship between school funding and the cost of state educational mandates, along with the cost of optional local programs and services;
7. To consider means by which the school funding formula could promote cost-awareness so that there is full awareness of pupil and school unit needs and of the funds needed to address these needs, and how scarce the state and local revenues can be most efficiently used and targeted at the greatest of these needs;
8. To consider how the school funding formula, and the statutory language which describes this funding model, should be constructed to make the school funding formula more understandable to all groups that are affected by it;
9. To consider the interrelationship of the above issues to each other, or such other issues as the Task Force may deem necessary.

Goals

By September 14, the Task Force should issue a preliminary report to the Governor containing the following:

1. For each of the issues listed above:
 - a. A brief description of the issue and resolutions that were considered by the Task Force;
 - b. A more detailed description of the recommended resolution, including its relationship which each of the other recommended resolutions; and
 - c. A recommended implementation year (based on considerations of the immediacy of the need for resolution, and the availability of data and programming resources that would be necessary to implement the recommendation).
2. The Task Force's public comment plan, describing the activities which the Task Force will perform to (a) disseminate its preliminary recommendations to Maine citizens, (b) encourage public comment on these recommendations, and (c) receive comments from interested individuals and groups.
3. By December 9, the Task Force will present its final report to the Governor, the Education Committee of the Legislature, and the State Board of Education. The content of the final report will reconsider the issues discussed in the preliminary report, with the following additions:
 - a. A summary of the major concerns and recommendations, as provided during the statewide discussions, together with Task Force recommendations.
 - b. A list of statutory changes recommended by the Task Force, to be effective beginning July 1, 1993.
 - c. All necessary details needed to support the Task Force recommendations for implementation in FY 94, including any necessary detail sufficient to collect further data, develop appropriate computer programs, and draft additional statutory language.
 - d. A list of additional statutory changes recommended by the Task Force, to be effective beginning July 1, 1994.
 - e. All necessary details needed to support the Task Force recommendations for implementation in FY 95, including any necessary detail sufficient to collect further data, develop appropriate computer programs, and draft additional statutory language.
4. During the first regular session of the 116th Legislature, the Task Force will communicate its recommendations according to a plan developed by the Task Force.

Membership

The membership of the Task Force shall be composed of representatives from the following organizations:

1. The State Board of Education
2. The Maine Department of Education
3. The Education Committee of the Maine Legislature
4. The Appropriations Committee of the Maine Legislature
5. The Maine Aspirations Foundation
6. The Maine Department of Administrative and Financial Services

The membership of the Task Force shall also include individuals who, by background and experience, are affiliated with the following interests:

1. School Superintendents
2. K-12 Teachers
3. Elected municipal officials
4. The Chamber of Commerce
5. The local school boards

The Task Force shall have the following joint chairs:

Jane Amero, currently the Chairman of the State Board of Education, and Senator Stephen Estes, currently Senate Chair of the Legislature's Education Committee.

Others may be asked to participate from time-to-time as needed.

The committee membership shall be appointed by the Governor in consultation with the joint chairs. Members shall be selected with consideration for geographic distribution and the need for balance in representation among high-receivers, middle-receivers, and low-receivers under the current school funding formula.

Terms of Membership

The members of this committee shall serve until the business of the Task Force is completed, unless they should resign from the Task Force before that time. In the event of a vacancy, the Governor, in consultation with the joint chairs of the Task Force, shall select an appropriate replacement.

Administration

The Maine Department of Education shall serve as executive secretary to the Task Force and provide technical and administrative support, as needed.

Meetings

The co-chairs shall develop a meeting schedule for the Task Force. Subcommittees may be established as needed to carry out the work of the Task Force.

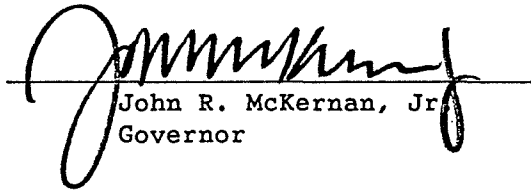
Compensation

Members shall serve without compensation. Necessary expenses incurred by members in the performance of their duties which are allowed by state law shall be reimbursed as allowable expenses. If the member's parent organization does not provide this reimbursement, then reimbursement will be provided by the Department of Education.

Period of Authorization

The Task Force shall perform its duties through the final day of the first regular session of the 116th Legislature. The Task Force will dissolve following this date, unless the Governor further extends its work.

The effective date of this Order is July 9, 1992.


John R. McKernan, Jr.
Governor