

# DESERET Morning News

## Omnibus ed bill draws flak

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Some lawmakers say that a bill that bundles a dozen education measures into one could be a move down the wrong road, having "bad" bills leaning on the merits of good bills for passage.

An unprecedented education omnibus bill, SB2, cleared the Senate floor Tuesday in a 21-7 vote. It appropriates \$2.5 billion for public education programs.

Sen. Howard Stephenson, R-Draper, said rolling the funding bills into one helps streamline coordinating clauses in the bills while other lawmakers said it will also save time and be easier for legislative staff to process.

But some senators didn't like the idea of seeing bills they supported strapped to bills they didn't and said lumping a bunch of bills together including two measures that failed to clear the House because it is easier could be a slippery slope.

"I find myself disappointed having to debate this bill in its omnibus forms ... disappointed that we have to pass bad bills tethered to good bills it's not the best way to be conducting the people's business and we owe it to the people to take time and deliberate these bills instead of lump them all together without input," said Sen. Ross Romero, D-Salt Lake.

Included in the omnibus bill:

- \$60 million for teacher raises
- \$2.9 million to provide \$200-a-day stipends for extra teaching preparation days to special educators during the school year.
- \$6.9 million for an optional grant program to provide an extended year for math and science teachers, who would use the school buildings during the summer.
- \$5 million to pay teachers highly qualified in math, science and technology an extra \$5,000 a year.
- \$3.5 million to give software to families to prepare preschoolers for kindergarten and allocate money to support the state's seven International Baccalaureate programs.

Another initiative aimed at giving students a firm base in financial literacy is also included in the bill. It would create an optional K-12 financial literacy track that would familiarize students with the facts of finances and arm

students with skills to help them sidestep pitfalls like bankruptcy, foreclosure and identity theft down the road and require education leaders to integrate financial concepts into the curriculum.

One of the more controversial measures within the omnibus bill is a change in charter funding that would require school districts to provide an allocation of property tax revenues for each resident student attending a charter school meaning the student's home-district funding would follow him to whatever school he chose to attend, even if it is located outside the district. Currently the state foots the bill for charter funding but leaders say that tab is getting a little too steep as charter schools multiply across the state.

Stephenson said he realized that the bill doesn't have everything in it that everyone would like but in passing it the senators could go home proud knowing they are helping those in the state that need it the most.

"If we pass it we can go home knowing we have looked out for the children in our state, the families in our state and the professional educators in our state," he said.

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