

EDUCATION

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modifications to that bill. "It might be totally different than it is now, so that's why I don't get into too much of an uproar in trying to study it and learn it in detail at this point," he said.

Jones said Daugaard's education proposal is "the number one piece of legislation that's being talked about this year."

"The bill was introduced in the House Education Committee, of which I'm a member - and I'm glad to be there; I think I belong there - but the bill includes three items and one involves continuing education ... getting rid of what we commonly call tenure. The second issue was the \$5,000 bonus to each of the to 20 percent of teachers in each of the school districts, and the third item is \$3,500 for each high school math and science teacher as a bonus."

An audience member asked the three lawmakers about the process that would be needed to determine which teachers are among the top 20 percent to qualify for bonuses.

"There has been such an overwhelming response from educators and administrators both from across the state who feel that (bonuses) may not be the best way to proceed. With that in mind, we formed a task force among the senators, at least, to pool our ideas on how we might want to approach that differently," Nygaard said. "The ideas include giving smaller awards to the top 80 percent of teachers. And if it's a fact that we do have bad teachers, maybe that 20 percent who would be at the bottom would get the message. Another idea is to create more discretion for local school boards and administration to decide how they want to do this, and not have it cast in stone."

Nygaard said he agrees with the governor's assertion that math and science performance must improve among South Dakota students.

"What we've been talking about in that task force is how do we motivate that. One idea is to give \$40,000 over five

years to South Dakotans who want to study in our state and become math and science teachers. Those funds would be used to help with tuition and fees to help young people get that education with a commitment to stay and teach in South Dakota," Nygaard said. "I'm not sure that I agree with the idea of giving the best science teacher a piece of the small amount of money that we have to start to get back to funding education properly. If it's just rewarding the status quo - there's something wrong with the status quo."

"We're not getting math and science education across generally in South Dakota. It's not as good as it needs to be in K through 12," he said. "I think the empirical data shows that. I'm not in favor of what's been proposed and I'll be one of those to try to come up with a better solution."

"There are two evaluation forms that are going to be used for teachers' performance, and I believe they're both supposed to be objective ... there's a certain criteria that the teachers will go by, and I think there's a student evaluation," Boomgarden said. "I think the devil is in the details, and a concern is also what type of work is it going to put on the school districts. I'm sure they (the evaluations) are going to be fairly lengthy ones to determine the top 20 percent of the teachers. At least you're seeing some money coming in to education. It would be money that would be going somewhere else if it wasn't going into the education pot."

Boomgarden said the issue of sustainability - of providing funds needed for teacher bonuses each year - concerns him.

"We've come under budget constraints before, and what do you think is the first one to come under fire? Here we are making a promise of doing a possible bonus. You think it's going to be year after year, but maybe, maybe not," he said. "That's where I get a little skeptical when you start to hear of these new programs coming up and that you're starting to spend more money and making promises here and there. Maybe in a couple of years we will be crunched. As for the \$3,500 for science

and math, it's trying to mimic private industry if you will."

Boomgarden noted that some people in the health field often receive sign-on bonuses as part of their employee agreement.

"That's kind of what this \$3,500 is being used towards right now. If you teach math and science we want to try to keep and you and we want to give you an incentive so that if you think you'll do this type of profession you'll get an opportunity to get a little boost in your paycheck," Boomgarden said.

He said he wasn't sure if the bonus would be enough to sway students to become math and science teachers.

Jones describes points of the legislation - HB 1234 - that are receiving the most attention from the governor and state lawmakers.

"Basically what it amounted to is they wanted to do away with continuing contracts, which is tenure; they wanted to give 20 percent of the teachers a \$5,000 bonus, and they also wanted to give a \$3,500 bonus not to just the best math and science teachers but to all math and science teachers."

He said school administrators from across the state traveled to Pierre to talk with lawmakers about the effect this legislation, if approved, would have on local school districts.

"If you give only the top 20 percent of the teachers a \$5,000 bonus, you are putting a target either on their back or on their chest," Jones said. "You are going to have dissension among the troops, and there a lot of situations in many schools teacher morale isn't very high already. We have proven over the years that South Dakota is 50th in teacher pay in the United States, and also 50th in state aid to education. That's our status quo; we are perfectly happy to be there, and I don't understand it. That's the worst."

"If we do some of the things (proposed in HB 1234) we are probably going to have more mass exodus out of the teaching field, and we're going to lose some our very good

teachers," he said.

Administrators also told lawmakers, Jones said, that the portion of the bill that awards a \$3,500 bonus to math and science teachers will compel teachers who qualified to teach those two subjects but are currently teaching in other areas to vacate their current posts in hopes of instructing math or science.

Jones said the state does not need to get rid of continuing contracts (tenure) as a way to rid South Dakota of bad teachers.

"Right now with continuing contracts, there are things that the administration must do in order to dismiss a teacher. The main thing is they have to document everything. They also have to give those teachers who are struggling a plan to improve," he said. "The administration is to do all of these things. If they've gone through all of these steps and they haven't seen the improvement that is necessary, that teacher can and will be dismissed."

Jones said he believes that instead of trying to eliminate tenure, the focus should be on administrators having the resources to properly do their jobs when it comes to evaluating teacher performance.

Vermillion Superintendent Mark Froke told the three lawmakers that he has read numerous articles and research regarding merit pay. "As far as anything actually being implemented, you can't find much of it. You certainly can't find anything that's going to help student achievement, like the governor wants to do."

"If this has a chance of moving through the Legislature and eventually being approved, I would ask that you put in an element of local control for the local schools to decide how that plan is going to be developed, and also give us a year or two to develop that plan," the superintendent said. "If it's going to pass, I would ask for a delay to allow the stakeholders to be involved in developing the process."

LIBRARY

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that we can."

Several council members expressed concerns that including the columns could be a risky budgetary move.

Council President Kent Osborne said that while he could see how the skylights would impact usability and enjoyment of the library, "It's a little harder for me on the columns."

Council Vice-President Howard Willson said he was not against the columns, per se.

"I'm against the fact that it's outside our budget realm," he said. "I don't like to be spending money that's outside our budget realm when I know that we're already going to fight very hard in 2013 just to come up with a balanced budget."

Willson added that additional expenses could be accrued when workers begin to modify the existing building.

"What happens if we tear into that building and, Heaven forbid, we have a \$200,000-\$250,000 (problem) that's got to be fixed?" he asked. "Then the city council is going to have to take that out of next year's 1 percent, 2 percent sales tax money, and unfortunately, this year that money was a lot shorter than what was budgeted."

The architect estimated the project should have a contingency of approximately \$200,000, Prescott said.

"Basically she said ... they estimate a 5 percent contingency," he said. "If you do the math on the dollar figure that's presented there, we don't need to have a \$200,000 contingency if you want to utilize an architect's number of a 5 percent contingency. So that would bring that \$200,000 down to

just under \$120,000."

Flanagin said if the council decided "that they can't afford \$28,500 on a \$2.4 million project, I would say fine. I won't fight you to the death about it. But I think they'd be nice to have."

Mayor Jack Powell said \$28,000 should not be looked on as "chump change."

"It's possible that it's the difference between whether we have the resources to do the whole project or not," he said. "I understand that it's a small percent of the whole project, but it's \$28,000."

Ultimately, the city council unanimously approved a motion including alternates one and three. They were split on the inclusion of alternate two, with Powell calling the vote in its favor.

The proposed expansion project will include adding more than 11,000 square feet of space between a proposed first floor and basement addition north of the current building. An additional 780 square feet of space will be added on the south end.

Last year the city council had appropriated \$1.4 million in second penny money, a Community Development Block Grant that brought in approximately \$192,500 and a longtime University of South Dakota library science professor had donated \$800,000 toward the project before she passed away in July.

At Monday's meeting, Flanagin said the library board also contributed \$138,000 - virtually all its resources - and raised more than \$200,000 for interior furnishings.

"A year ago, we weren't even talking about the library because we didn't have any money," Powell said. "And we're scraping dollars wherever we can get them, we've gone out to our public, we do things inside so we can get the library that we deserve."

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