

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

HOUSE RESOLUTION

No. 8

Session of
2003

INTRODUCED BY STAIRS, S. H. SMITH, ROEBUCK, ARGALL, BAKER, BELFANTI, CALTAGIRONE, CAPPELLI, CLYMER, COY, CREIGHTON, CURRY, DALEY, DeWEESE, J. EVANS, FAIRCHILD, FLEAGLE, FLICK, FREEMAN, GEIST, GEORGE, GOODMAN, GORDNER, GRUCELA, HARHAI, HARHART, HARPER, HARRIS, HENNESSEY, HERMAN, HERSHEY, HESS, HICKERNELL, HUTCHINSON, JAMES, JOSEPHS, KIRKLAND, LAUGHLIN, LEH, LYNCH, MAITLAND, MAJOR, MANDERINO, McILHATTAN, MELIO, S. MILLER, PRESTON, READSHAW, REED, REICHLEY, RUBLEY, SATHER, SAYLOR, SCAVELLO, SCRIMENTI, SHANER, B. SMITH, SOLOBAY, STERN, R. STEVENSON, T. STEVENSON, SURRA, THOMAS, TIGUE, WALKO, WILT, YOUNGBLOOD, ZUG, WANSACZ, PALLONE AND HORSEY, JANUARY 29, 2003

AS AMENDED, HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, FEBRUARY 11, 2003

A RESOLUTION

1 Establishing the Commission on Rural Education (CORE) to examine
2 and study the status of rural education in this Commonwealth
3 and make recommendations for enhancing the quality of
4 education in rural communities.

5 WHEREAS, According to the Center for Rural Pennsylvania, more
6 than 2.8 million Pennsylvanians reside in rural communities
7 within this Commonwealth; and

8 WHEREAS, Data from the United States Census Bureau reveals
9 that during the 1990s the number of rural residents between the
10 ages of 36 and 54 increased by nearly 7% while the number of
11 rural residents between the ages of 25 and 35 declined by 8%;
12 and

13 WHEREAS, The economic climate in rural Pennsylvania depends
14 greatly on the ability of schools to graduate and retain

1 individuals possessing the knowledge and skills necessary for
2 success in the job market of the region; and

3 WHEREAS, The ability to improve the readiness of rural
4 children to enter school is significantly dependent on improving
5 the availability of and access to programs and services with the
6 capacity to meet the basic needs of rural children; and

7 WHEREAS, There continues to be a debate within the
8 educational research community regarding the affect a school's
9 geographic size and student population size have on the quality
10 of education and the offering of other services such as
11 transportation; and

12 WHEREAS, Since children need a safe physical environment in
13 which to learn, the quality of school facilities is an important
14 consideration in reviewing whether rural schools are meeting the
15 needs of the student population; and

16 WHEREAS, The ability of rural schools to attract and retain
17 quality teachers and administrators is critical to ensuring
18 student access to a learning environment which prepares them for
19 a successful future; and

20 WHEREAS, Rapid technological advancements significantly
21 challenge rural schools; and

22 WHEREAS, The capability of schools to provide state-of-the-
23 art equipment for students and updated training for teachers is
24 crucial to ensuring that graduates of rural schools are able to
25 compete with their peers in postsecondary education and the work
26 force; and

27 WHEREAS, In a struggling economy where resources are scarce
28 and the existing system of taxing real estate remains the
29 predominant means of raising local revenue, it is essential to
30 ascertain that taxpayers in rural areas are getting the best

1 academic return for their investment; and

2 WHEREAS, With the underlying principle of education being
3 that all children can learn and all children must be afforded
4 the opportunity to learn, it is critical to evaluate
5 alternatives to the traditional public education system and the
6 impact those programs have on access to quality education; and

7 WHEREAS, Because research has demonstrated that many
8 graduates of rural schools leave the area permanently to gain
9 access to affordable postsecondary educational opportunities or
10 pursue a desired career choice, access to quality guidance and
11 career counseling is critical to ensuring that students in rural
12 schools make informed decisions about their academic and
13 professional future; and

14 WHEREAS, The challenges faced by rural schools are
15 significant, so the General Assembly and the Congress of the
16 United States must enact measures enabling rural schools and
17 their students to prosper; therefore be it

18 RESOLVED, That the House of Representatives establish the
19 Commission on Rural Education (CORE) of the Commonwealth to:

20 (1) Compile data on rural Pennsylvania, including
21 demographics and labor market information.

22 (2) Review the availability, affordability and quality
23 of school readiness programs and services, including, but not
24 limited to, child care and early childhood education.

25 (3) Evaluate the impact of transportation services on
26 student access to rural schools and the cost of operating
27 rural schools.

28 (4) Compile and analyze data on the academic performance
29 of students attending rural schools, including, but not
30 limited to, an evaluation of scores from the Pennsylvania

1 System of School Assessment (PSSA), the number of advanced
2 placement courses offered and the number of students enrolled
3 in advanced placement courses, graduation rates and rates of
4 enrollment in postsecondary education institutions.

5 (5) Compile and analyze data on the revenues and
6 expenditures of rural school districts, including a review of
7 results from the Standard and Poor's School Evaluation
8 Services.

9 (6) Examine the delivery of special education programs
10 and services, including the costs, access and quality.

11 (7) Examine the availability and utilization of
12 alternative programs of elementary and secondary education,
13 including, but not limited to, private and parochial schools,
14 charter schools, cyber charter schools, community education
15 councils, distance learning, dual enrollment and home
16 education, and evaluate the impact of these programs on the
17 ability of students to attain Pennsylvania's academic
18 standards.

19 (8) Review staffing patterns in rural schools to
20 determine the adequacy of the available pool of quality
21 teachers and administrators and the impact of those patterns
22 on educational programs and make recommendations for
23 recruitment and retention of quality teachers and
24 administrators.

25 (9) Examine the quality of existing facilities in rural
26 schools, including the availability and quality of technology
27 and instructional equipment and materials, and evaluate the
28 impact of the facilities on the educational programs within
29 rural schools.

30 (10) Examine the availability, utilization and adequacy

1 of vocational-technical, career education and guidance
2 counseling programs in rural regions of this Commonwealth to
3 determine the extent to which these programs are encouraging
4 students to remain in Pennsylvania, providing students with
5 the marketable skills necessary to obtain employment in the
6 region and helping students to adequately assess their career
7 options and make informed decisions.

8 (11) Examine the availability and affordability of
9 postsecondary education programs within rural areas of this
10 Commonwealth and make recommendations for ways to increase
11 student access to postsecondary education programs, including
12 advanced placement programs.

13 (12) Review programs, strategies and laws in place in
14 other states regarding elementary, secondary and
15 postsecondary education in rural communities.

16 (13) Identify exemplary local initiatives and best
17 practices currently in place and make recommendations for
18 replicating the initiatives and practices in other similar
19 regions of this Commonwealth.

20 (14) Meet with the leaders of Pennsylvania's business
21 community to determine their involvement with rural school
22 districts and to consider ways of improving the quality of
23 education through the implementation of effective business-
24 education partnerships.

25 (15) Review safety concerns in rural schools,
26 particularly special needs relating to geographic locations
27 and the availability and quality of alternative education
28 programs for disruptive students.

29 (16) Meet with members of national organizations working
30 to improve the quality of education and community life in

1 rural areas, including the National Center for the Study of
2 Small and Rural Schools, the Rural School and Community Trust
3 and the Rural Education Technology Alliance.

4 (17) Examine the potential impact of the No Child Left
5 Behind Act of 2001 (Public Law 107-110, 115 Stat. 1425) on
6 rural education in this Commonwealth;

7 and be it further

8 RESOLVED, That the commission consist of 25 members appointed
9 as follows:

10 (1) The chairman of the Committee on Education who shall
11 serve as chairman.

12 (2) The minority chairman of the Committee on Education
13 who shall serve as vice chairman.

14 (3) The Speaker of the House of Representatives in
15 consultation with the Majority Leader shall appoint six
16 members, no more than three of whom shall be members of the
17 House of Representatives, and the remaining members shall be
18 two representatives of this State's business community, at
19 least one of whom represents a business located in a rural
20 region of this Commonwealth, and one representative of a
21 local work force investment board located in a rural region
22 of this Commonwealth. Legislative members shall be members
23 who represent rural legislative districts.

24 (4) The Minority Leader of the House of Representatives
25 shall appoint four members, no more than two of whom shall be
26 members of the House of Representatives and the remaining
27 members shall be one representative of a business located in
28 a rural region of this Commonwealth and one representative of
29 a local work force investment board located in a rural region
30 of this Commonwealth. Legislative members shall be members

1 who represent rural legislative districts.

2 (5) The Secretary of Education or a designee.

3 (6) The chairperson of the State Board of Education or a
4 designee.

5 (7) The chairperson of the Center for Rural Pennsylvania
6 or a designee.

7 (8) Five representatives of the higher education
8 community: the Chancellor of the State System of Higher
9 Education or a designee, one representative appointed by the
10 Pennsylvania Commission for Community Colleges, one
11 representative of State-related universities, one
12 representative of Pennsylvania's private colleges and
13 universities appointed by the Pennsylvania Association of
14 Colleges and Universities and one representative from a
15 Pennsylvania proprietary institution appointed by the
16 Pennsylvania Association of Private School Administrators.

17 (9) Five representatives from the basic education
18 community: one school administrator from a rural area
19 vocational-technical school appointed by the Pennsylvania
20 Association of Vocational Administrators, one current chief
21 school administrator from a rural school district appointed
22 by the Pennsylvania Association of School Administrators, one
23 current classroom teacher and one former administrator or
24 classroom teacher from a rural school district each of whom
25 is appointed by the Pennsylvania Association of Rural and
26 Small Schools and one school board member from a rural school
27 district appointed by the Pennsylvania School Boards
28 Association.

29 All appointments to the commission are to be made within 30 days
30 of the adoption of this resolution; and be it further

1 RESOLVED, That the commission have the authority to adopt, by
2 majority vote of its membership, rules of operation and conduct
3 of its study; and be it further

4 RESOLVED, That the commission be authorized to hire or
5 contract for such services as it deems necessary and that all
6 expenses APPROVED BY THE MAJORITY LEADER incurred or authorized <—
7 by the commission be paid from accounts under control of the
8 Chief Clerk; and be it further

9 RESOLVED, That the commission report its findings together
10 with its recommendations no later than June 30, 2004.