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Possibly one of the most controversial and heavily debated measures this year has to be educational reform. Issues including mid-term funding, open school transfer, charter schools and career teacher incentives have topped the lists of legislators and lobbyists, Democrats and Republicans alike, each hoping to see their own initiatives included in the final draft of legislation.

Called the "son of 1017," **SB1100**, by Sen. Don Williams, D-Balko, is the most broad-based educational reform measure in the works. A similar House measure, **HB2055**, by Rep. Jack Begley, D-Goodwell, is also working its way through the Legislature, but has received less attention.

"It probably has a good chance of making it through both houses," Education Secretary Floyd Coppedge said recently, though he did expect problems with specific issues as school choice, which, along with open school transfer, is being dealt with under separate legislation.

Some of the more controversial sections of the bill include career teacher incentives and retirement funding, early and alternative education programs, permanent mid-term funding solutions and textbook funding increases. The proposed initiative carries the weight of over \$100 million in state dollars.

The so-called "Ryan Luke bill" has managed to survive its trip through the legislative process. The measure modifying penalties for those involved in child abuse cases is facing attention from the full Senate. With near unanimous support so far, **HB2053**, by Rep. Laura Boyd, D-Norman, passed the House with a vote of 98 to 2 early last month and the Senate Judiciary Committee with a vote of 11 to 0.

One of the few lawmakers in opposition to the bill, Rep. William Graves, R-Oklahoma City, told House members the bill had the potential of contributing to the already too many false child abuse cases. "It has been shown that two-thirds of all child abuse cases are unfounded," he said on the House floor. "DHS has too much power already. DHS can, by speculation or suspicion, take children away from good parents."

Saying the bill "fills in the gaps" of the current system, Boyd called the necessary attention to child abuse "unfortunate."

"In 1994, there were 31 deaths caused by abuse, 39 percent were children under the age of one, and 74 percent were under five years old," she said. "I believe this bill goes a long way to protect children, not just adults. HB2053 goes a long way to bring this issue to a balance."

The "Ryan Luke bill" is awaiting a vote by the full Senate.

An amendment to Sen. Lewis Long's "horse tripping bill" now expands the measure to address domestic violence. **SB680** addresses the underground sports of horse tripping and bear wrestling.

"While some say it's not a problem now, I want to stop it before it becomes a problem," the Glenpool Democrat said late last year, just after prefiling the bill. "I think everybody has a conscience. I don't think anybody wants to see animals get hurt."

Sen. Penny Williams, D-Tulsa, offered an amendment on the Senate floor, increasing the fine for assault and battery against spouses, former or current, and anyone with whom the defendant has had a child or used to live with.

"All we are doing," Williams told Long at the time of the amendment, "is increasing the penalty for domestic abuse from five hundred dollars to two thousand dollars, which does not compare to five thousand dollars for wrestling a bear."

In the House Committee on Criminal Justice, the bill was amended to reduce the fine for bear wrestling to \$2,000, and increase the fine for domestic violence to \$3,000.

Passing the Senate unanimously, the measure is awaiting consideration by the House.

A measure by Sen. Trish Weedn, D-Purcell, was killed in the Senate Committee on Small Business, but resurrected moments later.

SB719 modifies the requirements of the Oklahoma State Bureau of Investigation (OSBI) to provide criminal history information to members of the press. Originally defeated in the Senate Committee with a tie vote of 4 to 4, questions were raised as to the vote's legitimacy. The uncertainty caused the committee's chairman, Sen. Jim Maddox, D-Lawton, to reassemble members

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