

STATE NEWS WEEKLY SUMMARY CONTINUED



posal.

Boyd reiterated on Tuesday that the difference in the figures resulted from DHS' contention that the agency would need to add 20 caseworkers and 4 supervisors in order to meet the continuing monitoring provisions in the bill.

"We have no intention of creating a new division within DHS to fulfill this requirement," the Norman lawmaker said. Instead, she explained, the General Conference Committee on Appropriations is examining DHS' 1997 fiscal year funding request and is considering whether it will fund additional caseworkers.

Because of that, Boyd noted, a provision was added to the bill that makes the continuing monitoring provision dependent on the availability of funding.

Boyd also fielded questions from Rep. Danny Hilliard, D-Sulphur, who asked how a provision dealing with Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) would work. Boyd said the plan would require an annual commitment of \$260,000 from the legislature. That money would be allocated to the program's county-level branches as needed, Boyd added.

The most harsh questioning came from Rep. Carolyn Coleman, R-Moore, who said a constituent was "insulted" by a provision

requiring criminal background checks of adults coming in contact with child care facilities.

The woman, Coleman explained, had operated a home-based day care facility for 13 years without having to submit to such a check. Boyd said the thought "it is better to err on the conservative side to protect children," rather than to err in a way that might endanger children.

The House gave the measure a 99-0 passing vote. The measure now heads to the Senate, where it is expected to be considered and voted on for the last time before going to Governor Frank Keating's desk.

—SHAWN ASHLEY
05/07/96

RYAN LUKE PASSES NEXT PHASE

■(GIT) The highly publicized "Ryan Luke Bill" passed the Senate today with a vote of 47-1. However, the Senate author of the measure, Sen. Ben Brown, D-Oklahoma City, made the motion for a reconsideration, so it may be few days before the bill crosses the governor's desk.

HB2053, modifies the requirements for those involved in child abuse and neglect situations, requires criminal history investigations of foster parent applicants and provides for prompt medical treatment for

abused children.

The measure also provides for a special review application to be made after removing a child from custody, states that no child shall be placed in the custody of any individual subject to the Oklahoma Sex Offenders Registration Act, provides for legal representation for abused children, transfers responsibility for removed children to the Oklahoma Office of Juvenile Affairs and provides for review and approval of training curriculum.

After a brief explanation of the conference committee report, which Brown said simply cleaned up the measure, Sen. Jerry Pierce, R-Bartlesville, had a few words to say about the bill.

"I realize everyone will vote for this bill. I am explaining why I don't think it does anything to change the system. All this bill is, is political hype about a serious issue. You all think by passing this, people will think we're doing wonderful things," Pierce said.

"We made a mistake by creating a bureaucracy to deal with child abuse. We need to break this up by returning power to the local police and sheriff's offices."

Pierce said that the current social worker network is leading to more fraudulent accusations of child abuse cases.

Pierce also expressed a concern regarding the stipulation in the bill which would require judges involved with domestic violence cases to attend seminars relating to those issues.

Pierce said these seminars would serve a specific organization's agenda to "brainwash" the judges.

"Judges should be able to think for themselves and make judicial decisions based on their research, not some seminar," Pierce said.

Brown responded "This bill is not going to solve the problem, and I wish I could wave a magic wand and the problem would be gone. But it is to the point we have to do something, or nothing."

"There's a lot of good people doing the best they can to help these kids. I know there will be another year to address this problem, but in that year, how many kids will die? This is just one more piece of the puzzle."

Members of the Senate adopted the conference committee report and passed the measure with a vote of 47-1, with Pierce being the only opposing vote.

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