



Capitol Network News

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Weekly Edition, Friday, May 17, 1996

EDUCATION LEADERS COMMENT ON MID-TERM FUNDING SOLUTION

By Brandon Beard
Staff Writer

■(GIT) Though most in the education community are pleased to have some type of solution to the mid-term funding problem, some have concerns about specific points of HB2055, the bill aimed at correcting school funding. The bill passed the House and Senate Thursday and is on its way to the governor's desk.

"We are pleased with most of it," said Vicki White-Rankin, legislative information officer for Oklahoma City Public Schools. "There are, however, some flaws that are not advantageous to the kids I represent."

White-Rankin pointed to one section of the bill that changes the maximum number of days a student may be absent before no longer being included in average daily membership figures. The bill reduces allowed absences from 20 to 10.

"This will potentially cause a fairly dramatic reduction in our student count," she said. "We have many many impoverished families, especially in the urban areas."

Many of poor families in the district often find it difficult to produce a doctors release for an extended illness, White-Rankin explained.

"Many of those families do not even have a phone."

Another point of concern is a provision requiring schools to show a student growth rate of 1.5 percent before being eligible for funding.

With some 40,000 students in the Oklahoma City public school system, a growth rate of 1.5 percent is equal to approximately 500 to 600 stu-

dents, the average size of most school districts in the state.

"We have had to grow a whole school district before we get a penny," White-

Rankin said. "In three years we have had approximately 2,500 new students."

She added that the 1.5 percent rate is expected to be phased out over the next three to four years.

"It looks worse when you have a larger district," said Education Secretary Floyd Coppedge, calling the concern a legitimate one. "The truth of the matter, however, is that larger districts have more schools. From my own perspective, it's (the 1.5 percent threshold) going to be washed out eventually — it's no worse for them (larger districts) than anyone else."

One point of the bill she did applaud was

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"You'll never have a system that is 100 percent acceptable to everyone."

Floyd Coppedge
Education Secretary

LONG DELAY EXPECTED IN STATE'S SUIT AGAINST FORMER STIFEL EXECUTIVE

By Shawn Ashley
Staff Writer

■(GIT) The state Attorney General's office plans to wait nearly a year before taking further action in its lawsuit against the former head of Stifel, Nicolaus' public finance office in Oklahoma, *Capitol Network News* has learned.

"We have been working closely with federal prosecutors and did not want to do anything that might jeopardize their case."

Gerald Adams

Gerald Adams, spokesman for the attorney general's office, said, "We're likely looking at 10 to 11 months or more before we begin discovery" in the state's lawsuit against

Robert Cochran.

The 48-year-old Cochran headed Stifel, Nicolaus and Company's public finance office in Oklahoma until his firing in 1994. The St. Louis-based firm, once considered the state's biggest and most powerful financing company, sold its Oklahoma operations in 1995.

Cochran and Stifel are accused "of a pattern of racketeering activity" in a \$23 million federal lawsuit filed by the attorney general in October.

The suit alleges wrongdoing in six deals — 1989, 1991 and 1992 bond issues for the Oklahoma Turnpike Authority, a 1991 Grand River Dam Authority issue, a 1992 Oklahoma City Airport Trust Authority deal and a 1990 Pottawatomie County Development Authority issue.

Adams said the delay is the result of fed-

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