



Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – MINNESOTA'S STORY

“What’s critical and what’s not” for successfully chartering schools became the basic questions for charter school proponents, given the talk of a compromise being put together by Representative Nelson. In *Zero Chance of Passage*, Senator Reichgott Junge wrote that on May 11th, Ted Kolderie wrote her a memo that stated:

“What’s Critical - Everybody – and this includes emphatically the teachers who are interested in the idea getting enacted – agrees on these:

- 1. The State Board, as an alternative sponsor. (The only one that counts.) The up-front exemption from the rules.*
- 2. The separate bargaining unit for teachers.”*

In that memo there was also concern about “The Killer Amendment” – an amendment that would limit the sponsor to the local board and limit the number of chartered schools.

As proponents were defining the critical provisions of chartering and identifying where they could compromise, Representative Nelson was working on compromise language in order to get the charter provisions approved by the Conference Committee and eventually the House.

So, what were the compromises he proposed?

- 1. “A chartered school must be approved by both the local school district and the Minnesota State Board of Education. There were no alternative sponsors.*
- 2. Only eight chartered schools would be allowed in the entire state; a single school board could approve no more than two.*
- 3. Only licensed teachers could form and operate a chartered school. A majority of the chartered school’s board of directors would have to be licensed teachers employed at the school.”*

Senator Reichgott Junge wrote in her book of her disappointment upon hearing about the compromise:

"... As I waited to hear the elements of Nelson's amendment, I had an uneasy feeling in the pit of my stomach. I don't remember who finally told me. I don't think it was Nelson himself. I just remember my reaction: I burst into tears. To me, the battle was over."

"I was stunned. Never in my worst scenarios, did I imagine that a chartered school would need double approval – by both the local school district and the state board. Never did I imagine that only teachers could start a chartered school. What about parents? As an attorney, I couldn't fathom how a board made up of a majority of teachers could govern a school...."

While Senator Reichgott saw the amendment as the end of the fight for chartered schools, Representative Nelson saw the compromise as the way forward to getting chartering enacted into law.

NEXT WEEK: How Representative Nelson saw the compromise and how it moved chartering forward.



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