

## EDUCATION

# 1997 Legislature education-friendly, lawmaker says

By Damon Hodge  
Sentinel-Voice

Gov. Bob Miller was on the button when he hailed the 1997 legislature the "Education Session" in his State of the State address, a lawmaker said recently.

The 1997 session, by far, had the most emphasis on education, Wendell Williams said Tuesday. Williams chaired the Education Committee.

Besides bills requiring kindergarten for 6-year-olds, enabling the creation of at-risk charter schools and creating the state's first law school, the 1997 legislature also approved a sweeping reform package - the Nevada Education Reform Act.

AB6 requires kindergarten for all 6-year-olds. The bill exempts parents who choose preschool or homeschooling, but requires their children to pass an assessment before they can go to first grade.

SB220 — the Charter School Law — allows for the establishment of charter schools designed to serve at-risk students. It is one of only two such laws in the country. Though there is a cap on the number of charter schools each county can have, there is no limit to the number that can serve at-risk students.

Aspiring law students will no longer have to trek out of state thanks to AB660 — a bill appropriating \$3.6 million for the state's first law school. The school is set to open on the University of Nevada, Las Vegas campus in the fall of 1999.

Community college students also got a reprieve. AB468, a Williams-sponsored bill, allows credits earned at Nevada's community colleges to count toward graduation at the state's universities. And SB271 lets parents and other individuals pay in advance tuition to attend accredited in-state and out-of-state universities — so long as the costs for the out-of-state schools don't exceed the in-state rates.

Williams said African-Americans should pay special attention to SB482 — part of the reform package — and its focus on school accountability.

Schools will be evaluated on individual achievement and school improvement as opposed to simply test scores.

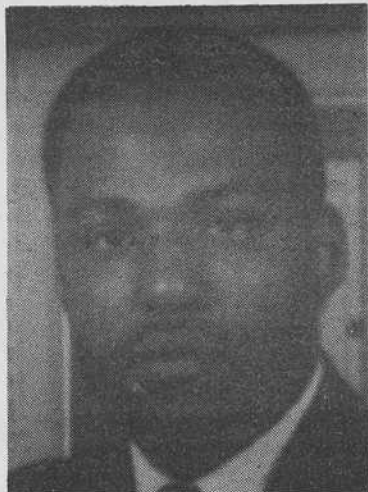
In addition, a nine-member education council will be created to implement uniform academic standards to take effect statewide in the 1999-2000 school year. The council also has the power to create the evaluation system and place on academic probation schools that continually underachieve.

The bill also provides legislative review of the evaluation process.

Though Williams said the 1997 legislature has much to be proud of, he said he was dismayed that bills passed in previous sessions are not being enforced.

He said the state still has not created a curriculum inclusive of the accomplishments of all ethnicities in the state and in America.

The publishers and books are out there, he said. "The Seattle school district does a great job (of inclusion)," he said.



WENDELL WILLIAMS

## School bills passed by 1997 Legislature

### ASSEMBLY

AB6 — Requires kindergarten attendance for children who are six years of age on or before Sept. 30 of a school year.

AB146 — Allows commercial advertising on buses owned by school districts.

AB191 — Changes the name of the fund for the improvement of occupational education to the fund for the "School To Careers" Program. Also adds state universities to the list of institutions eligible to receive funds.

AB198 — Increases the maximum amount of the residential construction tax that certain counties are authorized to assess to support school construction.

AB205 — Requires each school district to adopt a school bus safety program for all pupils enrolled in preschool, kindergarten and grades 1 to 4 who ride a school bus. Also requires schools to provide, at the time of enrollment, the parents or guardians of children enrolled in preschool, kindergarten or grades 1 through 6 with written information concerning the safety of pupils on school buses if such students will be riding a school bus for the first time.

AB353 — Relates to the financing of new construction, design, maintenance and repair of school facilities and adds one percent to the room tax and sixty cents for each \$500 of value to the real estate transfer tax in Clark County.

AB367 — Prohibits the use of the materials containing the chemical Diisocyanate in an occupied school building. Also requires that each school maintain a materials safety data sheet for this and other hazardous chemicals used on the building or grounds of the school and make those data sheets available to school personnel and to the parents of children attending the school.

AB376 — Requires school districts to inform parents that parents and pupils are required to comply with state statutes governing attendance and truancy.

AB468 — Requires Nevada's two universities to accept all credits earned by a student in any course at a community college in the state.

AB486 — Revises state law governing truancy and creates at least one advisory board to review school attendance in each county. Credit for such courses must be applied toward the major or other course requirements for graduation.

AB515 — Enhances the penalty for gross misdemeanors committed on public or private school property, at a school-sponsored activity, on a school bus, or when a school bus is loading or unloading students.

AB518 — Requires a court to advise a school district if a pupil unlawfully caused or attempted to cause serious bodily injury to another person.

AB660 — Appropriates \$3.6 million for the creation of a

law school on the University of Nevada, Las Vegas campus.

AB670 — Appropriates \$75 million from the state general fund for campus improvements and new construction.

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 44 — Directs the legislative commission to appoint an interim committee to study student discipline and special education programs in Nevada's public schools.

Assembly Concurrent Resolution No. 45 — Urges the board of trustees of each county school district, in cooperation with pupils, parents, teachers, school administrators and local law enforcement agencies, to develop and adopt policies for disciplining pupils enrolled in public schools within the district.

### SENATE

SB 51 — Removes a requirement that postsecondary educational institutions meet the standards of the commission on postsecondary education to be accredited.

SB54 — Increases the number of affidavits that an unaccredited postsecondary school must obtain to award degrees.

SB122 — Prohibits a person over the age of 21 who is employed in a position of authority by a school, college or university from engaging in sexual conduct with students.

SB168 — Requires public schools to comply with federal law governing the release of information from student records.

SB169 — Requires the state board of education to adopt regulations for an independent study program at the high school level in any required or elective course.

SB220 — Authorizes the formation of charter schools in Nevada.

SB271 — Establishes a program to allow parents and other individuals to pay in advance the costs of tuition at an institution of higher education.

SB294 — Authorizes the disclosure of a private postsecondary school's financial resources.

SB316 — Requires that school district boards of trustees establish plans for the training and certification of teachers and other educational personnel in the administration of CPR.

SB482 — Adopts the Nevada Education Reform Act. Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 8 — Urges school district boards of trustees to establish community advisory boards.

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 9 — Urges school districts to make full use of agreements to share equipment, facilities, personnel and resources.

Senate Concurrent Resolution No. 46 — Urges the board or regents of the University of Nevada to study the projected needs for teachers in the state's public school system and report its findings to the 1999 Legislature.

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