

Celebrating Chartering @ 30 – MINNESOTA'S STORY

While the charter school legislation had done well in the State Senate in the 1989 and 1990 session – it had gone nowhere in the House, so one of the changes made in the 1991 legislation was **to not call** these schools 'charter schools'. It was thought that by renaming these schools it would broaden support among legislators and improve the chances of passage.

On March 1, 1991, Senator Reichgott introduced a bill to authorize "Outcomes-based schools." In her book, *Zero Chance of Passage*, she wrote: "I was pleased to have powerful coauthors on the bill, all members of the senate Education Funding Division. DFL authors included **Senator Greg Dahl**, chair of the Education Committee; **Senator Ron Dicklich**, chair of the Education Funding Division; and **Senator Larry Pogemiller**. **Senator Gen Olson** was the Republican on the bill."

Senator Dicklich was a key player being from the Iron Range (which at the time carried enormous weight in DFL politics). He became not only an advocate, but a strong supporter of chartering because rural areas and the Iron Range were experiencing declining enrollments. The proposed closure of a rural school in his district – the Meadowlands School – made chartering an option he would support.

In a 2011 interview, Senator Dicklich stated: "Now I had an interest. All legislation is local. It only means something if somebody is in your ear. That became the tipping point for me that brought me to be – not an advocate – but a strong supporter of charter schools."

Meanwhile in the House, companion legislation was introduced four days later on March 11, 1991, by **Rep. Becky Kelso**. She was asked to be the chief author by **Rep. Ken Nelson**, chair of the House Education Finance Division. Rep. Nelson had been the House author of the charter bills in 1989 and 1990 and was a coauthor on the 1991 legislation. **Rep. Kathy Vellenga** and **Rep. Alice Hausman** (DFLer's) and **Rep. Charlie Weaver**, the lead Republican on the Education Committee, were also coauthors.

Senator Reichgott Junge wrote in her book about Rep. Kelso; "I was pleased Kelso would be leading the charge in the House. Capitol insiders considered her a 'rising star' on the House Education Finance Division, and she and Nelson would make a powerful team."

While Rep. Kelso worked the bill in the House, little did Senator Reichgott know that at the time Rep. Kelso thought there was no or zero chance of passage of the bill in the House.

COMMENTS: Like the 1991 bill, all subsequent charter school legislation that has been enacted has had bi-partisan authorship.

Next Issue: Moving the legislation forward.



Copyright © 2021 Minnesota Association of Charter Schools, All rights reserved.

You were added to this list as a sample email to test out MailChimp.

Our mailing address is:

Minnesota Association of Charter Schools
161 St. Anthony Avenue, Suite 1000
St Paul, MN 55103

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).

