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Jefferson School Board's legislative committee meets -- minus three members

Published: Tuesday, April 19, 2011, 4:53 PM Updated: Tuesday, April 19, 2011, 5:11 PM

By **Barri Bronston, The Times-Picayune**
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With the Louisiana Legislature opening its regular session Monday, the Jefferson Parish School Board's legislative committee met Tuesday to review dozens of bills that could affect students and employees.



Etta Licciardi

Typically, the committee takes a stand on education-related bills but because only two of the panel's five members attended -- Etta Licciardi and Mark Jacobs -- it could not take action.

But, with members of the Superintendent Diane Rousell's administration in attendance along with representatives of the Jefferson Federation of Teachers and legislative liaison Jennifer Ansardi, Licciardi did not want to have to cancel meeting.

Instead, she had Ansardi present a **digest of the various education bills set to come before the Legislature this spring**, and for certain measures, directed administrators to offer up their own recommendations at a later date.

The bills deal with such issues as teacher retirement, charter school start-up, sports injury management, prekindergarten age requirements, school system web sites and foreign language immersion programs.

Absent from the meeting were board President Michael Delesdernier and board members Ray St. Pierre and Mark Morgan.

Earlier in the meeting, Joe Potts, former president of the Jefferson Federation of Teachers, announced that the union has joined forces with **Better Choices for a Better Louisiana**, a grass-roots coalition which is working to help the state solve its fiscal crisis.

As part of that effort, Potts said, the group plans to ask the Legislature to enact a study of state tax exemptions as required under state law.

He said the more than 440 exemptions cost the state \$1.6 billion a year, and repealing those that

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are no longer necessary would go a long way in protecting education, health care, the environment and other interests from devastating budget cuts.

.....

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Why were the board members absent??? And why is the FORMER president of the union representing the group? Where's the current president? Is Potts still being paid by the union or does he do this voluntarily? Hmmm.....

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"Saying the state's financial problems are too severe to be solved by budget cutting alone, a newly minted coalition of labor unions and left-leaning advocacy groups said ... the state Legislature should review ... tax breaks that are costing the state more than \$7 billion a year ... "We have a revenue problem," said Edward Ashworth,... a driving force behind the new Better Choices for a Better Louisiana coalition".
http://www.nola.com/politics/index.ssf/2010/11/tax_breaks_are_costing_louisia.html

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"Joe Potts, former president of the Jefferson Federation of Teachers, ...has joined forces with Better Choices for a Better Louisiana He said the more than 440 exemptions cost the state \$1.6 billion a year"

Joe Potts is a former union leader and now is a spokesman for the left-leaning advocacy group Better Choices for a Better Louisiana. "The 5.4 BILLION discrepancies in our 'lost' potential revenue estimates are due to the sorry state of our educational system". "Hell I was a teacher and the people behind 'Better Choices' are for the most part Ivy League Liberals; we can't figure out the Louisiana Tax Code, how do you expect us to fit in math with diversity AND sensitivity training? You can't without that extra 1.6 or 7 billion, whichever it is", Potts said.

On a happier note; Board members Ray St. Pierre and Mark Morgan along with board President Michael Delesdernier were absent from the meeting, thus sparing all who did attend from suffering their attendance.

Contacted by this reporter, Mark Morgan, Gretna City Attorney and School Board Member said, he "will bring a 'sick' note from the same person who let his underachieving step-child into one of Jefferson's overachieving 'Magnet Schools'." St. Pierre and Delesdernier both could be heard in the background to say "tell them we're too sick to come to the phone."

It has been suggested by some that all three will boycott as many meetings as "they can get away with" until their opulent 93,000-square-foot, \$20.5 million building is complete. <http://www.nola.com/news/t-p/westbank/index.ssf?/base/news-7/1303281650232030.xml&coll=1>

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Such a pity! What a long drive for Ms. Licciardi from Tangipahoa Parish to Jefferson and not have a quorum to conduct business.

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