

# ARIZONA STATE LEGISLATURE

## SCHOOL SAFETY PROGRAM OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE

**Minutes of the Meeting**  
**Wednesday, May 31, 2000**  
**9:00 a.m., House Hearing Room 3**

### **Members Present:**

Senator Tom Smith, Cochair  
Senator Joe Eddie Lopez  
Alberto Gutier  
Stan Morrow

Representative Marion Pickens  
Hellen Carter  
Janet Lander  
William Udall

### **Members Absent:**

Representative Dan Schottel

Fred DePrez

### **Staff:**

Kimberly Yee, Senate Education Committee Analyst  
Kathy Seeglitz, Senate Education Committee Assistant Analyst

Senator Smith called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m., introduction of the committee was made, and attendance was noted.

Senator Smith provided some background information about the committee, explaining that it was formed in the school year 1993-1994 and is responsible for appropriating funds to establish a police officer and/or a probation officer in the schools. He explained that the School Safety Program is very narrowly focused, with the State paying for the officers' salaries, the Juvenile Online Tracking System (JOLTS), and some training and transportation expenses. He indicated that they started with a budget of \$2 million, increasing annually to a current budget of \$7.7 million. He suggested that it would take approximately \$12 million to fund every school that requested to be part of the program. Because of the limited funds, school administrators submit an application to enter the program and the committee members then identify the schools with the most serious problems, such as threats to staff and other students.

Senator Smith indicated that many presiding juvenile judges and district superintendents feel that the School Safety Program is one of the best programs the Legislature has provided in the last 20 or 30 years. Statistics have shown that incidents at some schools have been reduced by 70%. He emphasized that the committee has been working on an evaluation process that will provide additional data demonstrating the effectiveness of the program. Senator Smith stated that most of the police officers involved in the program are volunteers, who put their time, effort, and hearts into the program, which he feels is what has made it successful.

Senator Smith explained that the committee members will review the progress of the program today to bring everyone up to date. Subcommittees will meet in the next few weeks to prioritize

the requests from the schools and determine who will receive funding during the next school year for the School Safety Program.

## **PRESENTATION**

**David Garcia, Director of Research and Policy Unit, Arizona Department of Education (ADE)**, distributed the Annual Evaluation and Special Report 1999 – Arizona Safe Schools Program (Attachment 1). He explained that, in conjunction with Cheri Levenson, Research Consultant, ADE and Janet Lander, School Safety Specialist, Comprehensive Health Program, he conducted a study of the Arizona Safe Schools Program that involved focus groups comprised of school resource officers (SRO) and probation officers (PO) throughout the state. The presentation will include the focus group methodology, the key themes and findings, the school safety data, and the critical discussion of the Comprehensive Health and Prevention Program Survey (CHAPPS) data, as well as provide recommendations.

Mr. Garcia suggested that the reason they decided to use the focus group approach rather than a survey was because focus groups often provide information that is not otherwise available. With a survey, the questions need to be very simple. However, with focus groups, they were able to sit with the officers for an extended period of time and obtain an excellent picture of the program and some very detailed information on how the program was being implemented. Everything in the report is from the understanding and experiences of the officers. They interviewed 22 SROs and POs, of which 24% were from elementary schools, 44% from middle schools, 24% from high schools, and 7% from alternative schools. The schools were randomly selected to provide the best representation of the program statewide. The idea of this process was not to determine the effectiveness of the program; rather it was to determine what was happening on the school grounds.

Mr. Garcia stressed that even though they did not look for any one issue, they were able to find a number of key themes and findings. The four key themes were: 1) law-related education (LRE), 2) prevention of incidents, 3) relationship building and role modeling, and 4) issues confronting officers as a result of administration misunderstandings. Within each of these, there were a number of key issues. Under LRE, it was discovered that officers offer a very diverse curriculum, with more than 40 topics implemented in classroom lesson plans. Some of the most interesting lessons were those that involved highlighting the applicability of subjects such as English, Math, and Science to police work. Officers illustrated how these subjects are used on the job in such areas as crime statistics, forensics, and accident reporting. Many officers found it a challenge to set up classroom time because the school day is already so busy. The officers who were most successful in getting into the classroom had a teaching certificate or a substitute certification. One officer recommended that a substitute certification would be a benefit for all officers to obtain.

Mr. Garcia stated that many officers found it difficult instructing a diverse student body, which is a challenge for any educator. There are two main issues: 1) translating English materials into Spanish to provide instruction for limited English proficient students, and 2) providing instruction to students in the full grade spectrum, kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade. He explained that although teachers are generally focused on one grade or two at the most, officers are asked to

instruct in the elementary, middle, and high school areas, and found it a challenge to have age appropriate materials available for all levels.

Mr. Garcia indicated that another key finding was that LRE extends beyond the classroom. Frequently, officers mentioned how they take daily activities and turn them into law-related education. He pointed out that the most common problem among officers was difficulty in meeting the 10-hour classroom requirement. In addition to having a very tight schedule, oftentimes their police duties drew them away from the classroom. Another issue discussed was how to count LRE. There were some discrepancies among the officers as to what exactly counted as classroom LRE. One officer felt that if he provided a teacher with the lesson plan and the teacher gave that lesson, it should count as LRE credit. The pressure of scheduling ten hours a week in the classroom has created some confusion as to what the requirement is. Officers also thought that their informational opportunities should be counted toward LRE, as well as the classroom opportunities.

Mr. Garcia suggested that it was not the intent of the focus groups to specifically determine whether officers viewed the School Safety Program as an intervention or prevention tool. However, during their conversations, it was discovered that the officers considered the program a prevention mechanism rather than an intervention mechanism. They also felt their presence on campus reduced incidents and cited a number of examples in which their presence had limited or decreased the number of incidents on campus. In terms of prevention, length of service was extremely important. Officers who had been at the same school for several years had more detailed curricula, were no longer facing issues getting into the classroom, and had developed relationships with the students which was found to be the basis for preventing future incidents.

Mr. Garcia next discussed how relationship building is an antecedent to prevention and intervention. Officers spend a significant amount of time creating and developing trusting relationships with students, setting the groundwork for sharing confidential information that is often used to intervene or prevent potentially violent incidents from occurring. Officers mentioned numerous occasions where student relationships allowed them to be more effective in their roles and also believe that these relationships help to change negative attitudes and perceptions toward police. They see a difference over time as they interact with students. Mr. Garcia emphasized that officers exhibit characteristics of role models. Although a role model is not specifically the intended purpose of the position, some officers are going above and beyond their role to provide a source of stability for students, assisting with life problems, spending time with the students after school or on weekends, or taking them to breakfast, lunch or camping trips. Officers felt that the students who benefited most from these opportunities were those who have difficult home environments.

Mr. Garcia commented about the issues confronting officers as a result of administrative misunderstandings, which involves school employees and other law enforcement personnel. Many officers expressed some confusion and frustration with school personnel not understanding their responsibilities as police officers. For example, some school personnel want them to be on campus even though there may be an urgent law enforcement obligation to attend to. In another case, school personnel were using an officer as a taxicab driver to

transport students. Although these types of problems do not occur in all the schools, officers felt it was an ongoing education process with school personnel. Many law enforcement personnel viewed the SROs as “kiddy cops.” There was also a perception that SROs were the “low man on the totem pole” and were assigned to the schools because of that distinction. The fact is many officers volunteered for the program because they have an interest in students and want to be involved. There did not appear to be a uniform approach by law enforcement agencies to put a specific type of officer into the schools. Mr. Garcia stated that during the focus groups, they did talk about the Memorandum of Understanding. Some officers had not seen the memorandum; for those who had, they found it to be a useful tool that explained the program and their responsibilities.

Mr. Garcia next referred to the Feeling of Safety Survey and CHAPPS Data Comments. He pointed out that the results of four years of surveys indicate that 68% of students either agree or strongly agree that having an SRO and/or probation officer at their school has made their school a safer place; 88% of staff feel the same. He explained that the CHAPPS data was not published in the handout; however, it is available, but mentioned that there is some concern as to how the data was collected at some of the schools.

**Cheri Levenson, Research Consultant, ADE**, discussed recommendations to be considered by the committee as a result of the information gleaned from the focus groups and surveys. She explained that the next report is due to the committee by November 2000, and given the short timeframe, she recommended that the report focus on a single area of the key findings. She stressed that law-related education is a key component of the program and deserves further examination of its delivery in the schools. The passage of S.B. 1559 this year affords an opportunity to gather information that otherwise might not be available. She suggested that when ADE develops their annual school safety survey, questions regarding the Safe Schools Program should be included. In the long term, 2001 and later, how teachers and students viewed the implementation of the program may be of use. Findings from the officers’ focus group can be used to guide the study of teachers’ and students’ interactions with the program. In order to supplement the aforementioned information, there is a recommendation for an in-depth statistical analysis of the factors that impact safe schools. Finally, a study of those affected by the program should be conducted over the next several years including follow up with the officers.

Ms. Levenson informed the committee that there are recommendations for program improvements with two main areas to consider. First, the officers in the program made recommendations on how they felt the program could be improved. Second, there are other issues that ADE’s Research and Policy Division found and request that the committee address. For the officers, communication, teaching, consistency of assignment, training, and materials were important for program improvement. The communication issues specifically include the desire to get together with other officers and school personnel on a regular basis. School administrators need to be involved in the selection process for officers who will be on their campus. The teaching issues include the importance of officers having a substitute teacher certification to increase classroom access, because teaching is a skill and officers with prior teaching experience are more comfortable in the classroom. She commented that in the area of consistency of assignments, officers would like the option of staying in a school for several

years, even if their department normally rotates staff. Some law enforcement agencies rotate staff after one year which is not felt to be very beneficial for developing long-term relationships with the students. Regarding the training and materials, officers recommended monies be available for training so that they can provide the best and most appropriate education. Funds were also requested for bilingual materials or translation costs.

The final recommendations for the committee to consider are to: 1) clarify the law-related education requirement, 2) determine the maximum number of schools that a single officer can be assigned, and 3) address law enforcement agency understanding of the program.

Senator Lopez said that he was glad to see listed under “program improvements” the need for Spanish materials; however, he did not see a request to consider bilingual personnel and wondered if there is such a need. Ms. Levenson replied that the need for bilingual personnel was not mentioned directly by any of the officers in the focus groups. However, this is a first step in gathering information, and they only talked to probation officers and SROs. If that need is there, they did not express it.

Senator Lopez suggested that is one of the things that should be considered since there are schools in the State that are 80% to 90% Spanish-speaking. Certainly, it would be an asset to have bilingual SROs and POs who could relate to those students. Mr. Gutier concurred with Senator Lopez because the relationship between the students and officers should also include communicating in the students’ language.

Ms. Carter responded that in the statewide selection of probation officers for schools, that is one of the considerations. In the schools with a high population of Hispanic students, a number of the officers are bilingual and are compensated by the department for that skill. She said that she feels that the police agencies do the same.

Senator Smith agreed that some schools should require a Spanish-speaking officer and feels that decision should be made by the school administrator. He stressed that this type of recommendation should not be dictated from the State level, rather it should be resolved at the local level.

Senator Smith thanked Mr. Garcia and Ms. Levenson for their presentation and commented that it is important to evaluate and improve programs. He stated that he does not want to overburden staff with administrative requirements. He indicated that everyone should remain focused on what the program is designed to accomplish because law-related education is extremely important. Senator Smith explained that originally there was a policy statement that indicated police and probation officers were to work with the school principals, and because the State is paying their salary, the officers’ first priority is to the school. He said that he agrees that the program should be consistent throughout the districts. He suggested that in order to obtain maximum effectiveness from the program, officers must spend sufficient time on campus establishing relationships with the students and personnel and building bonds of trust.

Ms. Lander stated that last year she visited 30 schools; this year because of funding issues and staff cuts, they will only be able to visit 12 schools. In 2001, they plan to increase the site visits.

However, she said that she felt the focus groups provided a better view of what was happening on the campuses then when department personnel make visits. During a site visit, the administrator usually conducts the tour and officers are very careful about what is said. However, in the focus groups, the officers were very open and honest.

Ms. Carter explained that she conducted some site visits and talked with the probation and police officers. She said that she feels it is important that the community meet with members of the Safe School Program.

Senator Smith stated that one of the areas covered in the report was the number of incidents occurring on campus. He suggested that it is not always an accurate number because many administrators feel that if they report every incident, it will make their school look bad. So some are reluctant to report all incidents because of the publicity. However, with a police officer in the school, there is a purer report of incidents.

Representative Pickens said that she is concerned about the confusion as to what the role of the SRO or probation officer is and how to best utilize them. This apparently is a concern not just within the school, but outside the school, because the officers are often called away to do other things in the community. She said the officers' roles should be clarified and wondered if there has been any follow-up on this issue.

Ms. Lander explained that an SRO is first a police officer. Even though they are assigned to a school, there are times the police officer will be called off campus to assist other officers. At that time, salary and benefits are prorated so they are not paid under this grant. In smaller communities, the issue is somewhat difficult because there are not enough officers to work at the school exclusively. Many times the officers who are serving on school campuses must leave in order to address a situation that occurs in the community because of staffing. There are several issues that are involved in this one particular problem. She indicated that she does have some recommendations to propose.

Senator Smith commented that the police chief and principal must understand the philosophy of the program and must use their best judgement regarding the SRO's duties. There cannot be a strict rule that the officer cannot leave the school grounds.

Representative Pickens questioned how many times officers are pulled away from the school. Ms. Carter replied that in talking with some of the officers, once their role was clarified, there was a better understanding. Even though their role is primarily at the school, there certainly are exceptions. With a change in some personnel in both the SRO and principal positions since the program was implemented, it was more of an education process for the new people that made a difference in understanding what the essential elements of the program were.

Representative Pickens said that she feels that the committee should rethink the 10-hour classroom requirement; perhaps they are being too narrow in their definition and need to look at the other methods of communicating with the students as part of the LRE training.

Mr. Gutier suggested that another area the members need to review is allowing officers to serve multiple years. He mentioned that many changes have occurred in Arizona in the police chief positions and indicated that he could make a presentation to the Association of Police Chiefs.

Ms. Carter stated that another good source of information is the Arizona Chiefs Association for Probation Officers who have been an integral force in this program and very proactive in their approach to probation officers on the campus. Senator Smith suggested that the committee should use all the communication channels available to them.

Mr. Morrow said that as he listens to the members, he has noted some things. He explained that he has spent five or six years as an SRO and DARE officer with the City of Mesa. He suggested that everyone needs to understand that SROs are police officers first, because that is what they were hired to do. He stressed that in large cities such as Mesa, officers are assigned to a school and that is their only assignment; they do not get called away from the campus. However, in some of the smaller communities where there are only four or five police officers, they may be called away for a police issue. These communities have applied for only a portion of the officer's salary not his entire salary, because of the need for the police officer to assist in other areas. The duties of the police and probation officers are multifaceted, and the committee should know that these officers are doing the best they can to maintain the program, because all the officers feel it is an important program.

Senator Smith asked if the members could receive a list of the schools participating in the program so that they can visit and observe the program in action. Ms. Lander said that she would be glad to provide that information.

Senator Smith then called for discussion of the administrative management issues.

Ms. Carter distributed (attachment 2) a Proposal for Standardizing Law Related Education (LRE) Training. She indicated that one of the most common problems she discovered while talking to the officers and administrators was a misunderstanding of law-related education. Some were not aware it existed, others thought it was a simple straight curriculum, and others had a better understanding that it is many facets delivered in different ways. One thing officers did ask for was specific LRE training. In spite of the fact that funding had been allocated for training, it was not earmarked for LRE and schools were spending it on training that officers did not feel was appropriate. She proposed that monies for specific LRE training be paid to the State bar. She suggested establishing a two-day academy where the officer, along with the school administrator, learn the basics of LRE.

Senator Smith said that he would like to see the training adequate but not too expensive.

Representative Pickens asked if the funds could be pulled for a specific training. Ms. Carter replied that in the past there has been approximately \$1,000 identified for travel and expenses. In the future, she would like to see \$1,000 be allocated for LRE which would include the travel, expenses, and training. Training would be an ongoing process, with several scheduled during the year in different parts of the state.

Mr. Gutier asked how many SROs are there statewide. Ms. Carter answered that there are 175. Mr. Gutier expressed concern that it would take \$175,000 to train 175 officers. He shared that he trains 150 judges for about \$45,000 in a three-day seminar.

Senator Smith suggested that Mr. Gutier and Ms. Carter visit and discuss the costs for training. There is an appropriation of \$770,000 from the annual budget, as well as some money remaining from last year. Also, there are some officers funded from other sources.

Ms. Carter explained that the monies would not be just for a one-time training; it will be ongoing with sequential training four or five times in one year.

Mr. Morrow asked if Ms. Carter had looked at incorporating the program into other conferences such as the SRO statewide training seminar which holds an annual seminar where officers are trained. He said that he attended the first one three years ago with 50 officers attending and felt it would cut the cost considerably. Ms. Carter replied that the SRO training is very expensive.

Ms. Lander stated that the Arizona Bar Foundation is the recognized expert in LRE training. She explained that there is not enough time at the SRO conference to incorporate an LRE training course which includes seven different classes.

Ms. Carter mentioned that Maricopa County also has a conference for probation officers; however, there are so many topics in a day, that there is no ability to focus specifically on LRE. It is important for officers to understand that LRE is not just a curriculum, but a diverse menu of programs. Officers, according to their skills and abilities, can review the list of programs and chose what is best for their community.

Mr. Udall commented that the focus group participants were concerned about getting classroom time. He said that in his experience as a scout leader, more than 8 or 10 children in a group, the instructor will lose their attention. If the LRE classroom requirements are going to be reduced, he said that he feels it is not necessary to spend \$175,000 for training programs, rather the officers should concentrate on classroom time. He suggested that the officers should focus more on smaller groups of children because they are children who need that type of attention. He said that he feels the committee should spend the money on more officers, instead of training that may or may not be useful.

Senator Smith said that he has great confidence in Ms. Carter and Ms. Lander putting together a good program that is not too expensive. Ms. Lander asked if they should report to the committee what the program looks like before it is implemented. Senator Smith stated that there would be another meeting next month and felt they should present it at that time.

Mr. Morrow said that since officers should be on campus while school is in session, he recommended that the training be scheduled during the summer. However, they are usually reassigned once school is finished for the year, and it may be difficult for the officer to attend. Ms. Carter noted that during the school year there are times the students are not in the classrooms, such as teacher workshops and conferences, which would provide opportunities for training.



Ms. Carter stated that she is adamant that the number of LRE hours not be reduced. She suggested that there needs to be a clarification that LRE is not just in the classroom. All of the things that the officer teaches, such as weapons, voting, being on probation, dealing with peer pressure are essential parts of LRE that can be taught outside and inside the classroom. She mentioned when an officer takes large groups on camping trips, LRE topics are part of the discussion around that campfire.

Ms. Lander said that she would like the committee to consider some management issues because she feels ADE cannot make decisions on these and move the program forward without listening to what law enforcement and administrators have to say. Some of these issues include: 1) revisions to the Memorandum of Understanding, 2) rotation of officers after one year, 3) officer image, 4) school personnel involvement in SRO selection, 5) written guidelines for administrators, 6) increased direct communication with officers, 7) teaching credentials, 8) training, and 9) limiting the number of schools an officer should serve. She suggested that ADE facilitate a working group representing all entities who would meet on a regular basis to discuss these issues and jointly decide on the best solution. That resolution would then be communicated to the other participants so that everyone would understand that this is now the procedure.

Senator Smith stated that he does not feel that State government should dictate what is needed and feels it is a problem that many administrators want a manual to tell them what to do. He suggested that if the principal receives a Memorandum of Understanding, he should be able to take charge of that responsibility. He said that he understands that there is a current philosophy "if it does not say we can do it, it means we cannot do it." He explained that his philosophy is "if it does not say we cannot do it, go ahead and do it." He said that he understands where she is coming from even though he does not agree with it. He indicated that a working group can be established to review all these issues, but he would like to keep the administrative guidelines very limited and give the maximum flexibility to the principals, SROs, and probation officers. He said that he is not sure how it will work if the teachers select the officer assigned to their school.

Ms. Lander agreed with the Senator and suggested that is why she is asking for a working group who would assist in making decisions on these issues. She indicated that there are things that administrators cannot do, such as training monies cannot be used for DARE training. She stressed that she is not trying to make this too structured; however, it is becoming a very visible program with an \$8 million budget, which necessitates administering it in an extremely professional manner, providing accountability for taxpayers dollars, and treating schools equally. All that comes with some type of organization that is beyond just ADE making decisions.

Senator Smith asked if the working group should come from the committee. Ms. Lander indicated that she would like a few committee members, but also feels that they need to have representation from the police chiefs association, Arizona Bar Foundation, school administration, an SRO, and a probation officer. She said that she would be glad to visit with the committee members after the meeting to determine who will sit on this working group.

Senator Smith said that a motion should be made to approve the concept.

**Ms. Carter made a motion that there be a working group consisting of committee members, with one chairing the group, and members at large to discuss issues that arise throughout the year pertaining to the Safe Schools Program and the appropriate use of the resources allocated to the schools, and to establish guidelines for the program. Ms. Lander seconded the motion. The motion CARRIED with a vote of eight ayes, zero nays, and two not voting. (Attachment 5)**

Distributing two documents, Ms. Lander then discussed funding for FY 2001. The first document, "School Safety Applications – Renewal" (Attachment 3), indicates the monies requested for program renewals. She noted that Column F includes the suggested increase for training and supplies. She mentioned that under State statute, they are committed to continue funding the existing grants, but new applications require new monies allocated from the Legislature. On page five of the report, there is a \$5 million cost for the expansion applications, which include districts that already have officers on some of their school campuses, and are asking for additional officers for campuses that are not currently covered, or they have a large campus and need more than one officer. Also, there is a \$1 million cost representing new applications for first-time requests. The second sheet, School Safety Program Grant Available Funding for FY 2001 (Attachment 4), notes the State appropriation of \$7,770,000 and the previous year's unencumbered funds totaling \$340,800, giving a grand total of \$8,110,800.

Ms. Lander further explained that the proposed expenditures include the renewal applications, with the addition of \$500 for supplies and \$1,000 for training for each officer, totaling \$7,815, 421. Under S.B. 1559, ADE was granted a 1% administrative fund which is \$77,770. The grand total of expenditures would be \$7,893,121. Subtracting the expenditures from the available funds, there is \$217,679 to be allocated for new or expansion grants.

Senator Smith asked how many schools are in the program. Ms. Lander replied 194 sites.

Mr. Gutier asked if the \$1,000 for training is the monies discussed in today's proposal or is it additional funding. Ms. Lander answered that normally \$500 is allocated, however, occasionally \$1,000 is given to officers in the northern region who travel quite a bit. That cost varies from year to year, but has been between \$500 and \$1,000. This year she is proposing giving each officer \$1,000.

Senator Lopez said that the committee still needs to consider applications for approximately five additional SROs. He suggested that the staff review the applications and bring their priority list to the committee next month for consideration.

Ms. Lander stressed that it takes a tremendous amount of staff time to process the application paperwork. Therefore, she suggested that the subcommittee should review the applications and decide to fund either the expansion or the new requests but not both to streamline the work. Senator Smith asked how many applications have been received. Ms. Lander replied that they have 50 expansion applications and 25 or 30 new applications. Senator Lopez said that he

feels that they should consider new schools. Ms. Carter and Senator Smith agreed, with the remaining committee nodding affirmatively.

**Ms. Carter motioned that the committee consider the new applications be reviewed versus the expansion applications for consideration of using the existing funds for five additional schools. Mr. Morrow seconded the motion. The motion CARRIED with a vote of eight ayes, zero nays, and two not voting. (Attachment 6)**

Mr. Gutier asked once a school is in the program, can they be removed. Ms. Lander replied that the working committee needs to address that issue because there are no procedures in place to allow removing the funding if a school is found to be out of compliance. She emphasized that the committee should be authorized to discontinue funding if violations have been noted and the program is not followed as identified.

Mr. Gutier said that his concern is that there may be schools with a desperate need to get into the program; however, they have applied and have been rejected because of the limited funding. Senator Smith indicated that this issue was discussed at great length when the program started because oftentimes what happens with government funding, it is given to a program, and just as it gets successful, the funds are taken away. That is not what they want to happen with this program; however, he does agree if a school is cheating to get the money, then they should be removed from the program.

Ms. Carter stated that if a school has done well and abiding to the recommendations of this committee, funding should continue. But as Ms. Lander has pointed out, there are marginal schools. She feels that it is important to pull funds after warning the school, if they do not adhere to the guidelines. She said that it is integral that the schools understand that there are guidelines to follow with this program in order to receive the funding. If a school does not want to deal with the responsibilities, then they do not get the monies.

Senator Smith commented that one principal told him that the State can take away all the programs except for this one, that they would fight to keep this one.

Representative Pickens stated that she is sorry that the committee is only going to review the new applications because she feels there are some schools that truly need to expand the program because of changes in the school or district. She stressed that she hopes the committee does not view this as a precedent, because it is important to ensure that the schools that are currently funded are doing the best they can.

Ms. Lander said that one issue the working committee should consider is equity. She indicated that she noticed there are some very small school districts (400 students) that have two officers and yet there is a large high school with 2,700 students and only one officer.

Senator Smith suggested that the committee has identified more problems today than they solved.

Representative Pickens asked if there are additional monies appropriated to the Department of Education to assist in staffing for the oversight of the program. Ms. Lander responded that July 1, 2000 will be the first year ADE receives any monies from the State for administrative duties. There is a staff of four specialists who review the applications; however, the Department has been short two people since December. Also, there was a 13% cut in the major funding. There have been some issues that have made it difficult for department personnel to visit schools this year. Senator Smith indicated that they should make an effort to visit the schools.

Senator Lopez said that he has visited several schools with SROs and feels that there is no other program that is appreciated more by administrators and parents. He said that this committee has come a long way but cannot stop at \$7.7 million. It is important to recognize that there is a continuing need. He explained that someone remarked the other day that violence in the schools has decreased by 40%. He said that he thinks there is a perception and desire by parents to address the safety of the children. He suggested that funding this program is one of the most important issues for the Legislature to address.

Ms. Carter said that she recently had an opportunity to visit with some students who in the past had a high incidence of violence, but it had greatly diminished. She commented that she asked one of the kids who is a little gang member if he ever believed they could have a Columbine incident. He responded "why would we want to do that, we like our PO and SRO." She suggested that summed it up; the relationships developed. She explained that Columbine did have an SRO on campus but it did not follow the same type of guidelines where relationships are developed. Kids do not want to have problems on the campus because they have respect for their role models, which are the teachers, SROs, and probation officers.

The next meeting is scheduled for Monday, June 19, 2000 at 9:00 a.m.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Carol Dager  
Committee Secretary

(Tapes and attachments on file in the Secretary of the Senate's Office/Resource Center, Room 113.)