

NORTH DAKOTA LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

Minutes of the

WORKFORCE COMMITTEE

Tuesday and Wednesday, February 5-6, 2008

Idea Lab, University of North Dakota Center for Innovation, Grand Forks, North Dakota
Speedway Event Center, West Fargo, North Dakota

Senator Tony Grindberg, Chairman, called the meeting to order at 7:30 a.m.

Members present: Senators Tony Grindberg, Ray Holmberg, Dave Nething; Representatives Donald L. Clark, Stacey Dahl, Glen Froseth, Eliot Glassheim, Pam Gullerson, Nancy Johnson, George J. Keiser, Lisa Meier, Lee Myxter, Dan J. Ruby, Clark Williams

Members absent: Senator Tom Seymour; Representatives Mary Ekstrom, Steve Zaiser

Others present: Donald D. Dietrich, State Representative, Grand Forks

Kim Koppelman, State Representative, West Fargo
See [Appendix A](#) for additional persons present.

Representative Al Carlson and Senator Tim Flakoll, members of the Legislative Council, were also in attendance.

WORKFORCE SYSTEM STUDY - FOCUS GROUPS

As part of the workforce system study required under Section 20 of House Bill No. 1018 (2007), the committee will work with the Department of Commerce in conducting four focus groups across the state.

This committee meeting was made up of two half-day focus groups. The focus group for business leaders in the northeastern quadrant of the state met from 7:30 a.m. to 10:40 a.m., Tuesday, February 5, 2008, in the Idea Lab, University of North Dakota Center for Innovation, Grand Forks. The focus group for business leaders in the southeastern quadrant of the state met from 11:00 a.m. to 2:42 p.m., Wednesday, February 6, 2008, at the Speedway Event Center, West Fargo.

The committee used the following basic format for the two focus groups:

- Welcome and opening comments from Chairman Grindberg and Mr. Shane C. Goettle, Commissioner of Commerce;
- Introduction of two committee consultants who facilitated the focus groups;
- Review of 2007 legislative workforce initiatives;
- Summary of North Dakota's workforce situation;
- Review of prefocus group surveys;
- First breakout session;
- Second breakout session; and
- Closing remarks.

At each of the two focus groups, committee members sat at round tables with business leaders. The two consultants--Mr. Thomas P. Miller and Mr. Roy Vanderford, Thomas P. Miller and Associates, Greenfield, Indiana--worked together to facilitate each of the focus groups. Mr. Miller and Mr. Vanderford used a computer presentation ([Appendix B](#)) to assist in presenting information throughout each focus group. Due to weather-related flight delays, at the Grand Forks focus group Mr. Miller and Mr. Vanderford attended the meeting via videoconference.

Welcome and Introductions

Chairman Grindberg welcomed participants and briefly reviewed the history of the previous two interims' business climate studies and the evolution to this interim's workforce system study. Chairman Grindberg stated during the previous two interims it became apparent that workforce is one of the top challenges for economic growth. He indicated the Workforce Committee's workforce system study is just one of several workforce-related studies being conducted by the Legislative Council during the interim.

Chairman Grindberg introduced Mr. Goettle. Mr. Goettle said the No. 1 economic issue facing North Dakota is workforce. He said having more jobs than the workforce is able to fill is actually a good problem to have, as it is a much better situation than having no jobs. He said the workforce issue needs to be addressed through retention, attraction, and expansion of skills.

Interview

Following the welcome and introductions, the consultants conducted a group interview that included gathering information regarding the focus group participants. Additionally, the consultants reviewed the background of the workforce system study and its predecessor the business climate study, briefly reviewed the 2007 legislative workforce initiatives, reviewed the steps that will be taken during this interim's workforce system study, reviewed data relating to the state's current workforce situation, provided details regarding the results of the prefocus group survey completed by business leaders who were invited to attend the focus groups, and conducted two breakout sessions.

Breakout Session One

The first breakout session was made up of four exercises. The participants at each table were asked to discuss and record how the participants would like to change behavior of employers, workers, education, and government. The facilitators recorded the results reported from each table for each of these four classes for which changed behavior is sought. Upon completion of this breakout session, participants voted on which of the recorded behavioral changes are most important in addressing the state's workforce challenges.

Breakout Session Two

For the second breakout session, the participants changed the tables at which they were seated. The consultants identified the items participants rated as the most desired behavioral changes. Each table was requested to determine what actions should be taken and by whom these actions should be taken to lead to these identified behavioral changes. Specifically, the participants at the tables were charged with identifying and recording what state policies or legislation would accomplish the desired changes. Upon each table reporting an identified desired action, the participants again voted to identify the top-rated actions needed to address the state's workforce challenges.

Closing Remarks

At the end of each of the focus groups, Chairman Grindberg thanked participants for attending and reminded participants the workforce system study is an ongoing process. He said the Workforce Committee will be holding a total of four focus groups for business leaders which will culminate in the Workforce Congress on Thursday, April 10, 2008. He asked that participants please reserve that date and encouraged their ongoing participation in this process. At the completion of each of the focus groups, participants were requested to complete a brief survey.

The consultants will compile the information recorded and gathered through the two breakout sessions for each of the focus groups and will make this information available at the Workforce Congress.

At the completion of the focus group for business leaders in the southeastern quadrant of the state, Chairman Grindberg adjourned the meeting at 2:42 p.m.

Jennifer S. N. Clark
Committee Counsel

ATTACH:2