

## **GPO-WEP, Reading, License : Some Good-Some Not So Much Tom Moscovic-Legislative Chair**

### **Synopsis of the hearing on WEP & GPO April 16, 2024**

Focus on Reform vs Repeal of WEP & GPO: The recent hearing focused on the need for Social Security reform rather than solely repealing the WEP and GPO.

Hearing Room: The selection of a small hearing room limited attendees to 17 unreserved seats. Over 50 people were unable to get into the room. Why did members avoid the crowd by entering through other doors?

Addressing Penalties: The penalties imposed by the WEP and GPO must be recognized as unjustly withholding earned benefits.

Acknowledging Unfairness: All subcommittee members acknowledged the inherent unfairness of the WEP and GPO.

Financial Implications: Social Security estimates the annual cost of repealing the WEP and GPO to be approximately \$15 billion. It's crucial to understand that this is the money collected from penalties.

Impact on Beneficiaries: The government dismisses the impact by citing a low percentage affected—less than 3 million out of the 68 million Social Security beneficiaries. Penalizing public employees' earned benefits for revenue is justified to sustain the fund and ensure its continuation without significant disruptions or losses. The bottom line is that the government is justifying taking our earned benefits to sustain Social Security.

Reform Without Penalization: Alternative avenues for reform must be explored to ensure fairness without penalizing beneficiaries.

Not Genuine Engagement: Many questions and comments during the hearing seemed more like grandstanding than genuine inquiries, underlining the need for productive dialogue.

Bipartisan Support: The bipartisan backing of reform, evidenced by 318 cosponsors, is significant and should not be ignored.

More Information: When we receive more information on this Legislation, H. R. 82, we will send it out.

Hear from Affected Americans: Listen to the November 2023 Hearing: Social Security's Disservice to Public Servants.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4Fi1Rca554M&amp;t=864s>

### **'We know what works' DeWine pushes Ohio schools to adopt science-based literacy education**

Columbus Dispatch Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine is once again making the push for phonics-based literacy education for Ohio students after last week's State of the State address.

In Columbus, guests packed the Lincoln Theatre in King-Lincoln Bronzeville on Tuesday to join DeWine in viewing a documentary that champions an emerging science of how kids learn to read. DeWine, along with education leaders, parents and community members viewed a screening of the "The Right to Read," a 2023 documentary that follows an NAACP activist, a teacher, and two families who champion the importance of literacy.

In addition to highlighting the importance of literacy, the documentary also addresses an increasingly controversial topic of how children learn to read. For several years, DeWine has spoken about what he said is the best method, a method addressed in the documentary called the "science of reading."

DeWine said Tuesday the science of reading method, which is in essence, reading programs that teach students to break down words and sounds by learning the rules of the language, is needed to keep Ohioans educated and the workforce competitive.

"The good news is we know what works," DeWine said Tuesday. "We have to have people who are well-educated, we certainly have to have people who can read."

Kareem Weaver, an NAACP activist, teacher and the film's producer, said literacy is a fundamental right in society, and implementing science-based phonics education

"This is a civil rights issue," Weaver said. "This is not something that's just a bureaucratic thing — this is a civil rights issue. Kids deserve the right to read, and it's our responsibility as the adults wherever we stand ... that we're all along."

DeWine was also joined by Columbus City Schools Superintendent Angela Chapman, who delivered opening remarks. Columbus City Schools began using the science of reading method in 2020 and has seen some improvements in early literacy skills, [The Dispatch previously reported](#).

"We're committed to ensuring our approach is inclusive, reaching students of all backgrounds and abilities because we understand that literacy opens doors to opportunities and is a right, not a privilege," Chapman said Tuesday.

### **What is the 'science of reading'?**

The debate over how kids learn to read has been [quietly raging for decades](#), as outlined in the Right to Read documentary.

One method, structured literacy (or the "science of reading") teaches students to break words down into their phonemes or sounds.

The other method widely used in schools is called balanced literacy or whole language, and gives children strategies to decipher unfamiliar words by looking at a picture or context of the known words in a sentence. These are called cues, and while sounding the word out can be one, it's only supposed to be used as a measure of last resort.

Both sides of the debate have followers, but science and educational professionals are beginning to favor structured literacy.

In April 2022, a federally funded study from the University of Delaware showed that Reading Recovery, one of the most widely used cueing programs, lowered student performance in the long run, [The Dispatch previously reported](#). Children who used the program did well in first grade, but then they scored lower on state reading tests in grades three and four compared to students who didn't participate.

Late last year, Worthington-based Reading Recovery Council of North America filed a lawsuit in Franklin County Common Pleas Court seeking to block changes in last year's biennial budget which makes structured literacy programs prohibited under the new law, [The Dispatch previously reported](#).

### **Senate Bill 168 (Sent to the House)**

COLUMBUS, Ohio ([WCMH](#)) – A sweeping piece of legislation deregulating some aspects of K-12 education has passed one chamber of the Ohio General Assembly.

The Senate on Wednesday voted 24-7 to pass Senate Bill 168, a K-12 education bill that lowers existing requirements for advanced educator licenses, nixes mandatory state-prescribed evaluation systems and expands schools' ability to employ unlicensed people as teachers. On the Senate floor, the bill's sponsor, Sen. Michele Reynolds (R-Canal Winchester), said SB 168 will reduce unnecessary barriers and regulations while helping schools battle teacher shortages.

"It is imperative that we prioritize getting the best and brightest in the classroom to teach our kids," Reynolds said.

The bill's passage comes as the state is caught in a lawsuit about its newly-established Department of Education and Workforce, whose development ushered in the transfer of most of the state school board's powers to a governor-appointed position.

### **Unlicensed teachers, educator licenses, working outside school hours**

Seeking to address a widespread shortage of licensed teachers, the bill allows districts and private schools to hire unlicensed individuals to teach, so long as they hold a master's degree and pass a standardized subject area exam. Under current law, qualified people can teach without an educator's license so long as they are working toward licensure.

The bill also reduces the qualification that those seeking advanced educator licenses have a master's degree, instead requiring they have a bachelor's degree. The degree requirement for administrator licensure is also reduced to a bachelor's degree.

Teachers with out-of-state licenses are eligible under the bill to receive one-year licenses to teach in Ohio while they work toward in-state licensure.

Reynolds said in committee hearings on SB 168 that she sought recommendations from school administrators when crafting legislation to increase the number of teachers in Ohio classrooms. A group of education administrator organizations, including the Ohio School Boards Association, the Buckeye Association of School Administrators and the Ohio Association of School Business Officials, support statutory changes that increase schools' flexibility in addressing open teaching positions. But the Ohio Education Association, the union representing more than 120,000 school teachers and employees, is opposed to any licensing changes that reduce or eliminate quality controls – particularly in employing unlicensed teachers.

SB 168 is “side-stepping” controls that ensure students get high-quality education while educators are on track to become fully licensed, OEA lobbyist Matt Dotson testified in November.

“The unlicensed teacher option could end up being a disservice to aspiring educators by encouraging them to use a pathway that gets them quickly hired but never on track to becoming fully licensed,”

Dotson’s testimony reads.

The bill also removes a requirement that districts offering high school classes outside of normal school hours enter into supplemental contracts with teachers, something school administrators testified they support to increase districts’ flexibility. Dotson said the OEA worries that ending the requirement means teachers will be forced to work additional hours without extra pay.

### **Changes to increase local flexibility**

Several of the bill’s provisions are purported to increase districts’ ability to respond to their unique positions and challenges.

One change to Ohio law would allow districts and schools to develop alternative frameworks for evaluating teachers and administrators. Currently, districts are required to evaluate employees using state-provided rubrics.

Reynolds said allowing local district administrators to develop their own evaluation systems enables them to respond to the academic needs of their own communities. The OEA supports increased flexibility and discretion at the local level, but Dotson said in testimony that such freedom should come with state-level guardrails to ensure fairness and some standardization across the state.

Sen. Catherine Ingram (D-Cincinnati) echoed concerns about maintaining some form of standardization for teacher evaluations, especially considering that the state will continue to evaluate districts using annual report cards.

“How will there be a framework in making sure that we are comparing apples to apples?” Ingram said.

The bill also allows districts to decide how many hours their teachers need in dyslexia intervention training, so long as it falls between six and 18 hours.

SB 168 would additionally give districts the power to decide which non-teaching employees and contractors must be enrolled in the background check system the state uses for school employees. Only workers the district determines have “routine interaction” with or “regular responsibility” for caring for children would be required to enroll in the system.

### **Elimination of ‘obsolete’ laws**

SB 168 repeals more than a dozen sections of Ohio Revised Code that Reynolds categorized as “obsolete!”