

MURPHY COMMISSION RECOMMENDATIONS APPROVED IN 2007 SESSION

Arkansas should join "other states and move into the 21st Century as an innovator in the field of education; it should provide a genuine opportunity for charter schools for its children."

"Define and implement a system of performance-based pay for all Arkansas state employees and public K-12 employees, including teachers." (Murphy Commission, 1998, "Making Arkansas' State Government Performance Driven And Accountable")

(April 2007) Two Murphy Commission policy recommendations—broader charter school expansion and performance pay for teachers—were approved by the 86th General Assembly and signed into law by Arkansas Gov. Mike Beebe in the session that ended this month.

The Murphy Commission was a citizens group of more than 100 volunteers that spent three years (1996-98) examining Arkansas government before issuing a series of reports that featured policy recommendations. Accomplishments prior to this year's session include reduction in the state capital gains tax rate, charter school expansion, administrative restructuring and a uniform system of accounting for K-12 school districts.¹ The 2007 accomplishments build on these policy victories.

Broader Charter School Expansion

A key provision of the 2007 charter expansion passed by the legislature and signed into law by Gov. Beebe allows any successful charter organization to establish an unlimited number of schools irrespective of congressional district. Expansion is subject to state, not local board approval, and organizations must not be the subject of any disciplinary action, or in academic or fiscal distress. The 2007 expansion is much broader than earlier versions of the Arkansas Charter School Act, and is likely to increase competition in areas, including the Delta region in eastern Arkansas where it is needed.

¹ (December 2005) "Arkansas Policy Foundation Celebrates 10th Anniversary." Research memo