

# State board to review

## sex education mandate

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NJ-SEX EDUC.

By ROBERT J. BRAUN

The State Board of Education yesterday responded to legislative pressure and agreed to reconsider its controversial order requiring all schools in the state to offer sex education programs.

The vote came less than 48 hours after the State Senate voted 32-4 to direct the board to reconsider its April 8 decision mandating "family life education" in all schools, from kindergarten to high school.

The board members directed their six-member executive committee to conduct the review and report to the full

panel June 11. S. David Brandt of Cherry Hill, the board's acting president, predicted "formal action" would be taken at that time — either a reaffirmation of the previous order or changes in the disputed mandate.

Susan Wilson of Princeton, the board's chief advocate of the mandate, said the reconsideration would be "fair and impartial" and would "reconsider all the evidence."

Wilson, a member of the executive committee that will undertake the review, is head of the family life education committee that first proposed a mandate approach last August.

The board resolution acknowledged the Senate vote but made it clear it was not bowing to pressure. The language of the resolution indicates the "state board chooses to embark upon this reconsideration."

The State Senate resolution, despite its language directing the board to act, has no force of law. However, the board faced an almost certain legislative override of its decision if it did not agree to the reconsideration.

Brandt said the board would not conduct another full hearing before the June (Please turn to Page 8)

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11 meeting, but invited written comments by May 19. However, if the board does change the language of the mandate, it will be required by law to reopen the entire issue and hold at least one hearing.

The board already has conducted two public hearings during which more than 120 witnesses testified — most of them in opposition to the mandate.

The chances for a complete reversal of the board action appeared slim as board members restated their support for the mandated program.

"Serious questions have been raised by the Legislature that deserve a complete response," said Robert Wolfenbarger of Summit, "but we should also make clear our concern for the need for this program. There are clear and unmistakable needs for this sort of education."

Timothy Weeks of Newark restated his support for the mandate but agreed to the reconsideration "if, for no other reason, than to clarify some of the confusion that has arisen."

Brandt said he had "no idea" what the reconsideration would bring, but he said he hoped to bring in "advisers" who "might take a fresh look at what we've done."

Ruth Mancuso of Glassboro, the only board member to vote against the man-

date last month, said she would try again to persuade the board to keep family life education strictly a matter of choice by local districts. She refused to speculate whether she could draw any more votes.

However, board member Jack Bagan of Vineland said it was a "possibility" he would change his vote. Last month, Bagan voted for the mandate but issued a formal statement conceding he had "serious reservations" about it.

The intent of the Senate resolution has been subject to differing interpretations. While it asks the board to "reconsider" the April action, it also asks for a review of a number of questions — including the impact of the mandate on local decision-making and curriculum priorities.

Some board members have interpreted the "review" section to mean that the Legislature will accept the mandate with changes. However, Sen. Matthew Feldman (D-Bergen), the resolution's sponsor, said he wants the board to face the question of whether the curriculum should have been mandated at all.

Feldman offered the resolution as a compromise to head off a legislative confrontation with the board, an arm of the executive. Sen. Wayne Dumont (R-Warren) had introduced legislation to overturn the board action but his bill was defeated in the Senate Education Committee, which Feldman chairs.

Feldman said he might vote for the override if the board did not respond to

### Dog deaths linked to contagious virus

STILLWATER, Okla. (AP) — A highly contagious viral infection has been blamed for the death of about 20 dogs here within the past two months, says the assistant director of the Oklahoma State University Animal Diagnostic Laboratory.

The disease, known as parvovirus, afflicts dogs with diarrhea and vomiting

and results in death within 24 hours after the symptoms are noticed, E.L. Stair said Tuesday.

Officials have said a vaccine developed in mid-February is in short supply. Three hundred cases have been reported at one Dallas hospital since the first of the year. Cases in several Oklahoma cities have also been reported.