

Attachment F

Addendum to the HJR 24 Report to the General Assembly

**Submission Requested by HJR 24
Task Force Member Bridget Helmholz**

On August 18, 2010, the Task Force voted 9-1 to reject what has been referred to as the "Parrish report" as its report to the legislature. Despite the vote, the Parrish Report remains posted on the ISBE's website page dedicated to HJR 24, represented as the "special education task force report." Since the Task Force Report does not address the deficiencies of the Parrish report in detail, this addendum provides insight to the legislature as to why the Parrish Report was rejected.

When ISBE delegated facilitation of Task Force meetings to Tom Parrish, the investigation and deliberation of Task Force meetings the focus shifted away from the HJR 24 mandate of finding ways to increase funding for special education to the identification of how to *redistribute* current funds. As the meetings progressed, there was little, if any, discussion relative to leveraging additional dollars for special needs students, as mandated by HJR 24.

This disconnect between the unequivocal language of HJR 24 and the direction taken by the out-of-state consultant hired by ISBE has resulted in two reports, this majority Task Force report and what has been referred to in Task Force meetings as "the Parrish report." The Task Force overwhelmingly rejected the Parrish report for three reasons. First and most importantly, the majority of the Task Force members do not believe the Parrish report is responsive to the clear mandate of HJR 24. The report does not seek ways to

increase special education funding. In addition, as Parrish himself admits, his report does not reflect the opinions and conclusions of the Task Force. As he states in his report, "This report was solely written by the author. Where important independent analyses were conducted and/or specific policy recommendations presented to the Task Force by individual or collections of Task Force members, they are included as appendices to this report." Parrish Report, pg. 2.

Second, the majority of Task Force members found Parrish's focus on the redistribution of existing funds to be counter-productive. Unfortunately, as the focus of the Task Force shifted to a "redistribution" of funds that was not mentioned in HJR 24, members began analyzing special education funding in Illinois, not in terms of what is best for the children of Illinois, but in terms of what funding system was best for increasing the share of the existing funds for the individual entity or school district that member represented. The Task Force majority, in issuing this report, has taken special care to comply with HJR 24 and make recommendations to improve the funding situation for all Illinois school districts.

Third, the Parrish report ignores valuable data and information that does not support its conclusions. Task Force members acknowledge that parts of the Parrish report contain useful data and descriptions of national

and state funding formulas,¹ however much of the factual information contained in the Parrish report was already known to ISBE and the members of the Task Force through the work completed by the Illinois House Republican Research Staff, which resulted in a October 19, 2006 report on special education funding.² Task Force members were disappointed that state funds were utilized on an out-of-state consultant who chose to duplicate findings rather than assist the Task Force to make recommendations to increase special education funding and ease the burden on local school districts. It was also troubling that important data was clearly ignored or manipulated without acknowledging Task Force members' concerns.

Consequently, Task Force members believe that the Parrish Report did not reflect the opinions of Task Force members, did not reflect Illinois values with respect to priorities for special education funding, did not meet the mandate of the General Assembly, and was not based on sound public policy.

¹ In fact, parts of the Parrish report describing Illinois' funding formula were included throughout the Task Force's Report.

² See attached House report.