

edited from 421 words to 137 words

eliminate byline, unnecessary quotes

~~By Mike Sprague~~

~~Staff Writer~~

Students could be allowed to bring ~~cellular telephones~~ cell phones to school next year under legislation the state Senate Education Committee approved Wednesday on a 12-0 vote.

Senate Bill 1253, which is expected to go the Senate floor in a couple of weeks, would give school districts the discretion to make their own decisions on ~~whether to allow~~ allowing cell phones on school grounds. State law now bans cell phones from schools.

Whittier-area educators applauded the bill, saying it would give them more local control but said they aren't sure what policy changes they might adopt in response, if the bill passes.

~~"We will have a pretty good discussion on that topic before we allow them," said Anthony Avina, superintendent of the Whittier Union High School District.~~

~~"Safety is a big concern because kids are often times waiting for parents to pick them up," Avina said. "On the other hand, (cellphones) can interrupt the classroom. How many cellphones can go off in an hour?"~~

~~The bill was one of three dealing with the issue that went to the Senate committee Wednesday. Lawmakers voted to move the version by state Sen. Liz Figueroa, sending it to the floor for a vote, which could happen within a couple of weeks, she said.~~

~~"This was the hardest committee. We should enjoy a positive result now," said Figueroa, D-Fremont.~~

~~Sen. Bob Margett, R-Arcadia, and Assemblywoman Carol Liu, D-Pasadena, carried similar bills. Their measures were in essence folded into Figueroa's legislation and they will now be listed as principal co-authors of Figueroa's bill.~~

~~Margett said he was willing to give up authorship because there is no sense in having three bills. "I thought it was a good practical approach to the thing," he said. "The bill will give parents some comfort in knowing where their children are if there is a calamity."~~

Charles Gomer, a Glendora Unified School District trustee, told the committee that districts should make the decision, not the state.

"As a board member, I've found that parents want students to have a cell phone for safety," Gomer said.

~~But Dorothy Fagan, superintendent of the East Whittier City School District, said weighing safety against potential disruptions caused by cell phones will be a difficult issue for district administrators.~~

~~"I know with the emphasis on safety, especially since Sept. 11, parents are concerned," she said. "We also don't want to have a disruption in the classroom."~~

~~Fagan said the district may choose to give principals discretion, depending on the age of the child.~~