Picard's Kindergarten Bill Passes Senate

By Advertiser
Capitol Bureau

BATON ROUGE — Sen. Cecil Picard of Maurice wasted no time yesterday pushing through a bill mandating kindergarten attendance.

On Tuesday, numerous questions forced Picard to delay action on the Senate floor. The same day, the House Education Committee gutted a similar bill to say that schools have to offer kindergarten but children do not have to attend.

Picard told the Senate yesterday that he did not want that to happen to his bill. “I object to making it optional,” he said, and the Senate went along with him.

The bill passed 38-0.

Proponents say the program will give children a better preparation for entering school. Opponents say parents should decide when their children are old enough to begin formal training.

Kindergarten already is offered by most elementary schools in the state and educators say it is attended by 80 percent of the eligible students. But in most cases, it’s the other 20 percent that really need to attend, they say.

Picard’s bill now goes to the same House Education Committee that killed an identical bill proposed by its chairman, Rep. Jimmy Long of Natchitoches.