**Background:** The Education Improvement Act ("EIA") had required that all school boards be elected by district by September 1, 1996. Public Chapter 404 of 1995 amended that law so that cities could choose to have municipal school boards elected from districts, or at-large, or a combination of both. The legislative history did make it quite clear that the school board could be elected by any of these means without regard to how the city legislative body is elected.

**Arguments against the bill**
According to Sen. Womack, the EIA was meant to create a uniform system for governing schools and settle on elections by district as the best of the election options. He did not want to break the contract the legislature had made with school districts by enacting the EIA. He pointed out that the EIA was the result of compromise and that requiring school board members to be elected by district was meant to balance the requirement that school superintendents be appointed by the school boards. He said that city councils do not support the bill and that the bill will generate lawsuits that will cut into the funding that the EL4 was passed to provide.

Sen. Crowe was against the bill because polls showed that the people in his district wanted elections by district. He also mentioned that elections by district would allow for better representation of the "social makeup" of the city.

Sen. Kyle was against the bill because elections by district would lead to better representation of the interests of each section of the city.

Rep. Armstrong was against the bill because he was concerned that, in a city where citizens were polarized by income, race, or religion, a majority would always be able to elect every member of the board.

Rep. Brown was against the bill because at-large elections would lead to inadequate representation of minorities in Cleveland. (She acknowledged that she did not represent Cleveland.)

Rep. Brooks was against the bill because at-large elections dilute minority votes and allowing cities to have at-large elections will lead to expensive lawsuits under the Voters' Rights Act.

**Arguments for the bill**
According to Sen. Elsea, the bill was meant to remove a hardship placed on small cities that were too small to divide into districts and who would see a decline in the quality of their school boards if at-large election were not allowed. (However, a proposed amendment that would have restricted the bill's application to cities with populations over 23,000 was voted down.)

Sen. Burk was for the bill because it put the election decision in the hands of local governments who could choose to change the type of election if they wanted to. Sen. Henry was for the bill based on federalist principles.
Rep. Miller supported the bill because some cities don’t have districts and creating districts would be a hardship.

Rep. McKee responded to concerns that at-large elections dilute minority votes by stating that, historically, at-large elections have resulted in diverse boards. He stated that the purpose of the bill was to allow the election decision to be made locally.

**The critical amendment**

On May 18, 1995, Rep. Davidson introduced an amendment to add some "clarifying language" to the bill. This language was "except that municipal school districts whose current board members have been elected by district as of the effective date of this act shall continue that method of election. Later, " in the session, Rep. McKee, responding to a question by Rep. Odom, iterated that the amendment requires school boards currently elected by district to continue to be elected by district. That was about it for that section of the bill.