

Some Talking Points for the October 17, 2009 Special Legislative Session

Public School funding was cut to the bone by the 2009 Legislature:

- The 2009 legislature cut some \$27 million from public schools, forcing employees to contribute 1.5% more to retirement, effectively reducing salaries and take-home pay.
- The 2009 legislature refused to fund increases in health insurance costs forcing employees to accept greatly reduced health insurance benefits and pay hundreds, even thousands of dollars, more in health care costs.
- State general fund commitment to public education was cut by another \$165 million during the 2009 Legislative Session. While this cut was replaced with federal stimulus funds, it is further evidence of a reduced commitment to public education on the part of the legislature.
- These cuts happened in spite of the fact that the Legislature knew that public schools were already grossly underfunded. The Legislature's own Funding Formula Task Force has already determined that even in 2007 schools were underfunded by some \$350 million.
- **Additional cuts will** result in reduced educational opportunity and lower academic achievement as:
 - After school and special intervention programs are eliminated;
 - At-risk programs addressing our children in greatest need disappear;
 - High class size translates to less time for teachers to spend with each student; and
 - Students have less help to prepare for transition to college and work and stay on track to graduate.
- **Additional cuts will** result in 300 fewer teachers and other school employees for each 1% across-the-board cut;
 - So imagine your child
 - in classes of 30 or 40 students;
 - in a school with no school nurse or counselor;
 - in a school with no athletic programs;
 - in a school with no extracurricular activities;
 - in a school with no art, music, or PE teacher; or
 - in a school that can't be kept clean or maintained, harming children's health along with reduced learning opportunities.
- **Additional cuts will** result in increased pressure on unemployment compensation and state social services as laid off employees no longer participate fully in our economy.
- **Additional cuts will** result in a slower economic recovery for New Mexico, since economists know that spending on public education is the best economic stimulus possible

The legislature could choose cuts—putting effective programs on the shelf for a year or two; promising to restore the funding when the economy picks up; assuring New Mexico's voters of sufficient funding someday; dealing with the dropout problem next year or the next; forcing more school employees into poverty or leaving the profession; and thinking about closing the achievement gap in a year or two after even more kids have fallen through the cracks. **But**—New Mexico's eight year olds won't get a second chance at third grade! **Education cuts don't heal—ever!**

Tell legislators that New Mexico's children and their public schools have bled enough! The special legislative session must not cut school funding any deeper!

