

Monday, February 10, 2014

Take Back Our Public Schools NEA-NM & AFT NM Rally at the Round House: February 15, 2014, Santa Fe Plaza and march to State Capitol

Resolution to Have Elected State School Board Appoint a State Superintendent of Public Instruction in Senate Education Committee Wednesday Morning

Senate Joint Resolution 2-BOARD & SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION, CA, Sen. Padilla — proposes an amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico to create a nonpartisan, elected State Board of Education to make education policy and to appoint a qualified Superintendent of Public Instruction to direct the operation of the Public Education Department. This measure has passed Senate Rules and is scheduled in the Senate Education Committee for a hearing Wednesday Morning. Urge committee members to support this constitutional amendment to return control of public education to the voters.

Resolution to Stop Unfunded Mandates in Senate Rules Committee Tomorrow

SJR 15 NO NEW SCHOOL ACTIVITY WITHOUT FUNDING, CA, Sen. Ivey-Soto/Rep. Roch — proposes an amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico to prohibit state rules or regulations that mandate new or increased activity or service by school districts or charter schools from having the force of law unless funding for those mandates is provided. This measure is scheduled in the Senate Rules Committee tomorrow morning. Let committee members know we support this issue.

Still Waiting on Plan "B" for Budget Approval

The General Appropriations Act, House Bill 2, could return to the House Floor during any floor session. Let your House member, regardless of party, know that you support maximum funding "above the line" through the School Equalization Guarantee and meaningful salary increases.

The House Appropriations and Finance Committee (HAFC) approved the budget bill, the General Appropriations Act, House Bill 2, last Thursday morning. Most of the funding in House Bill 3 survived with no merit pay provisions and most funding still "above the line" in the school equalization guarantee (SEG). The measure still has an increase for beginning salaries at each teacher licensure tier of \$2,000. It still has a 3% average salary increase for all school employees and an additional 3% increase for educational assistants. The recommendation to send to the full house was on a straight party-line vote with Republicans arguing for more money below the line with reduced unit value and increased funding for the Public Education Department Secretary-designate to have discretion for her and the governor's pet projects.

All Republicans and Democrat Sandra Jeff attempted to amend the bill on the House Floor Friday afternoon to add merit pay and other of the Governor's and PED Secretary-designee Skandera's pet projects. The attempt failed on a tie vote as did the final vote on the budget as approved by the HAFC.

The debate on the amendment was over three hours long and consisted of repeated attacks on public education and trust in local control by almost every Republican who spoke. Representative Jeff strongly supported the Governor's proposals to destroy the power of local school boards and read a letter from the Central Consolidated Schools (CCSD) superintendent Don Levinski praising the Governor's and Secretary-designee's initiatives. She also read a letter that purported to represent the CCSD School Board written by board member Matthew Tso. Both letters argued for the Governor's position of deleting money from local school districts to apply to pet projects "below the line." If I had no more trust in local school districts than these two folks, I would certainly resign my positions of trust at the local lever. Of course the School Boards Association and the New Mexico Coalition of School Leaders and Superintendent's Association strongly support the same position on this issue as NEA-New Mexico and the Education Partners, maximum flexibility and funding to local school districts "above the line," not "below the line" to the Governor and Secretary-designee.

Speaker Martinez immediately moved the bill to the Speaker's Table, where he can control its next move. He and other House leaders assured NEA-NM lobbyists that there is a plan B to preserve the HAFC approved bill, stay tuned.

Immediately, let your House member, regardless of party, know that you support maximum funding "above the line" through the School Equalization Guarantee and meaningful salary increases. Ask them to resist the Governor and her Republican followers attempts to reduce funding to school districts (and local control)! Thank Democrats for their support on the House floor Friday and ask them to stay the course! If your Representative is a Republican, let them know you are disappointed in their lack of trust in you and your school district to make decisions at the local level.

Ask them to support House Bill 2 as it left the HAFC when it returns to the House Floor next week.

Some Other Legislation We Are Supporting

SJR 13 ANNUALLY INCREASING MINIMUM WAGE, CA, Sen. Martinez — proposes an amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico to establish a state minimum wage that increases annually at the rate of inflation. [Identical to HJR 9] This measure has passed the

Senate Rules Committee and is headed to Senate Judiciary. Ask committee members to support this important fairness legislation to let voters decide to increase the minimum wage.

SJR 8 PUBLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION, CA, Sen. Keller/Rep. MH Garcia — proposes an amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico to establish duties and functions of the Public Education Commission by granting the commission: the sole authority to render a final decision approving or denying an application for the establishment or renewal of a charter for or revoking a charter of a state-chartered charter school; and the sole authority to affirm or revoke the charter of a locally chartered charter school or applicant upon review of a local school board's decision to grant a new charter or renew an existing charter. This measure is awaiting a hearing in the Senate Education Committee.

S 54 PUBLIC SCHOOL FUNDING ADEQUACY, Sen. Soules — appropriates \$362 million from the General Fund to the Public Education Department for distribution through the State Equalization Guarantee for expenditure in FY 15 to provide adequate funding for public education in New Mexico based upon the funding increase recommended in the 2008 independent comprehensive study of the New Mexico public school funding formula as adjusted for inflation. This legislation is a symbolic gesture to remind the legislature of the findings of the Funding Formula Task Force Report created in June 2009. The task force stated that public education was underfunded by \$362 million. This measure awaits hearing in the Senate Education Committee.

S 197 SCHOOL TEACHER EVALUATION MORATORIUM, Sen. Sapien — provides a one-year moratorium on the teacher and school leader evaluation system created by the Public Education Department. This measure has not yet been found to be germane to this legislative session and remains in the Senate Committees' Committee

H 280 RETURN TO STATUTORY SCHOOL CLASS LOADS, Rep. Stewart — creates a new section of the School Personnel Act to return to statutory individual class and teaching loads over a three-year period; and appropriates \$6.0 million from the General Fund to the State Equalization Guarantee distribution for expenditure in FY 15 to support the first year of the three-year phase-in. This bill has passed the House Education Committee and awaits a hearing in the House Appropriations and Finance Committee. It is funded in the current version of House Bill 2 stalled in the House because of the tie vote.

HJR 3, CA, Representative Jim Trujillo This amendment will keep distribution to public schools from the permanent fund at the current level of 5.5%. The funding level dropped to 5.5% last year from 5.8% and, unless the amendment passes, will drop to 5.0% in 2016. For details about the measure follow this link. This measure is currently tabled in House Voters and Elections Committee. Ask members to send this important legislation on to its next committee.

HJR 4 CREATE ELECTED BOARD OF EDUCATION, CA, Rep. Miera/Sen. Keller — proposes an amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico to create a nonpartisan, elected State Board of Education to make education policy and to appoint a qualified Superintendent of Public Instruction to direct the operation of the Public Education Department. [Identical to SJR 2] This measure is awaiting its first hearing in the House Voters and Elections Committee

HJR 9 ANNUALLY INCREASING MINIMUM WAGE, CA, Rep. MP García — proposes an amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico to establish a state minimum wage that will increase annually at the rate of inflation. [Identical to SJR 13] This measure is awaiting its first hearing in the House Voters and Elections Committee. Ask committee members to support this important fairness legislation to let voters decide to increase the minimum wage.