

Wednesday, February 12, 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

Is a Compromise on School Funding in the Cards? Not Yet!

Talk of a possible compromise between Democrat and Republican House members regarding the school budget in the General Appropriations Act, House Bill 2 continued throughout the day. While details of any compromise were not public, a Democratic caucus failed to reach final consensus after meeting most of the morning; we continue to receive assurance from Democratic leaders that any compromise will not include merit pay or reductions in school employee raises. But until there is a consensus finalized, many things could be on the table.

The measure has been recalled from the Speakers table to the House Appropriations and Finance Committee (HAFC); this is where the compromise would likely be crafted. When a compromise is reached, the calendar dictates that House Bill 2 could return to the House Floor quickly. Let HAFC members and 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.

As the General Appropriations Act, House Bill 2, was debated on the House Floor last week it had no merit pay provisions and most school 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.

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. If you want to hear this debate, the Governor's office videotapes all House Floor Sessions. She probably never intended you hear the nasty things Republican House members say about you and local school districts, but its there. You can watch Friday's session at about 45 minutes into the video at this link.

Resolution to Have Elected State School Board Appoint a State Superintendent of Public Instruction Gets a do-Pass in the Senate Education Committee

Senate Joint Resolution 2-BOARD & SUPERINTENDENT OF EDUCATION, CA, Sen. Padilla, which proposes an amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico to create an 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 received a do-pass recommendation in the Senate Education Committee Wednesday Morning.

The do pass motion was a straight party-line vote with all Democrats supporting our position and all Republicans opposing it.

A vote of yes supports our position

Senator	Party	Vote on do-pass SJR 2
Chair John M. Sapien	D	Yes
Vice-chair William P. Soules	D	Yes
Craig W. Brandt	R	No
Lee S. Cotter	R	No
Bill B. O'Neill	D	Yes
Michael Padilla	D	Yes
John Pinto	D	Yes
Pat Woods	R	No
Gay G. Kernan	R	No

This measure goes next to the Judiciary Committee. Urge committee members to support this constitutional amendment to return control of public education to the voters.

Measure to Reduce Class Size in Committee Tomorrow

HJR 6 LIMIT CLASS SIZES, CA, Rep. Garcia Richard/Sen. Keller — proposes an amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico to provide for the sufficient education of public school students by enacting a graduated plan to ensure that, by school year 2020-2021, class sizes not exceed certain prescribed limits by grade level, classes in music, band, elective, and extracurricular courses excepted. This measure is scheduled to be in the House Voters and Elections Committee tomorrow morning. Ask committee member to support this symbolic measure to express support for smaller class sizes.

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 6 LIMIT CLASS SIZES, CA, Rep. Garcia Richard/Sen. Keller — proposes an amendment to the Constitution of New Mexico to provide for the sufficient education of public school students by enacting a graduated plan to ensure that, by school year 2020-2021, class sizes not exceed certain prescribed limits by grade level, classes in music, band, elective, and extracurricular courses excepted.

HJR 9 ANNUALLY INCREASING MINIMUM WAGE, CA, Rep. MP Garcia — 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.