

Update 02-2016

Third grade flunking bill

As predicted, [HB 67. SCHOOL GRADE PROMOTION & RETENTION](#), sponsored by [Representative Monica Youngblood](#), was given a do-pass recommendation by the [House Education Committee](#) this morning. It has no other referrals, so it is headed to sure passage in the Republican controlled House. This bad idea from the Governor and Secretary of the PED has been debated year after year in the legislature. It is one of Governor Martinez's main objectives for this legislative session once again. This measure would require that third grade public students who cannot pass a reading text be retained in the third grade, with no input from parents or education professionals. Research indicates that retention is not an appropriate educational strategy. On a bright note the ranking Republican member of the Senate Education Committee, [Senator Gay Kernan](#), has withdrawn her support for the bill and now believes that one test score should not determine whether or not a child is retained in third grade. So this bad measure can likely be killed in the [Senate Education Committee](#) after House passage. Please let all legislators know that we oppose this bad legislation.

Unqualified personnel in classrooms

Another bad public policy will be on the [House Education Committee](#)'s agenda on Wednesday. [House Bill 145](#), introduced by [Representative Conrad James](#), provides that an unlicensed person who has earned at least a bachelor's degree; has a minimum of three years' experience in each area of subject-matter expertise in which the adjunct secondary instructor will teach; passes the New Mexico teacher assessments in each area of subject-matter expertise in which the adjunct secondary instructor will teach; and completes a department-approved pedagogy course can teach subject areas in grades seven through twelve. These individuals will not be allowed to receive any benefits other than "negotiated" compensation. Although presented as a way to prevent shortages, in reality this measure allows school districts to save money by hiring unqualified unlicensed "experts" to teach. Let all legislators know that you oppose this attack on the quality of the teaching profession.

Higher minimum salaries

[Senator Mimi Stewart's](#) measure to increase minimum salaries, [Senate Bill 14](#), will be heard the [Senate Education Committee](#) tomorrow morning. The measure raises starting salaries for all licensure levels gradually between now and 2020. Level 1-

- (1) for the 2016-2017 school year, thirty-four thousand dollars (\$34,000);
- (2) for the 2017-2018 school year, thirty-six thousand dollars (\$36,000);
- (3) for the 2018-2019 school year, thirty-eight thousand dollars (\$38,000); and
- (4) for the 2019-2020 school year, forty thousand dollars (\$40,000).

Level 2-

- (1) for the 2016-2017 school year, forty-four thousand dollars (\$44,000);
- (2) for the 2017-2018 school year, forty-six thousand dollars (\$46,000);
- (3) for the 2018-2019 school year, forty-eight thousand dollars (\$48,000); and
- 4) for the 2019-2020 school year, fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000).

Level 3-

- (1) for the 2016-2017 school year, fifty-four thousand dollars (\$54,000);
- (2) for the 2017-2018 school year, fifty-six thousand dollars (\$56,000);
- (3) for the 2018-2019 school year, fifty-eight thousand dollars (\$58,000); and
- (4) for the 2019-2020 school year, sixty thousand dollars (\$60,000).

It also raises beginning salaries for principals to that of a level 3 teacher with a responsibility factor. Let members of the committee know that this is long overdue!

Shoring up retiree health care

[House bill 58](#), introduced by Representatives [Tomas Salazar](#) and [Dennis Roch](#). This measure amends the Retiree Health Care Act by increasing employee and employer contributions paid to the Retiree Health Care Authority (RHCA) Fund. The employee contribution rate increases from 1 percent to 1.375 percent of salary over 3 years, starting FY18. The employer contribution increases from 2 percent to 2.75 percent over this same time period. Overall, net take home pay for an employee earning \$40,000 annually will be reduced \$1.92 per pay period in the first year, \$3.84 the second year, and \$5.76 in the third year. The new schedule would not start until June of 2017. While it is difficult to support increased deductions during these tough economic times, the only other long-term option is to change retiree health care from a defined benefit plan to a defined contribution plan. We will work to see additional revenues and salaries for the 2017-2018 school year to mitigate the effects of the increases. The bill received a unanimous do-pass from the [House Health Committee](#) today and moves to the [House Appropriations and Finance Committee](#) where it will likely face tougher scrutiny due to the finance committees' usual reluctance to commit future legislatures to increased spending. We need to urge support of this measure as the best way to insure the solvency of the retiree health care system into the future for current and future educational retirees.