

## [Daily Legislative Schedules](#)

### **Revenues take a nose dive**

New Mexico is revising downward estimates for revenue growth to \$30 million from previous expectations of \$232 million. The New Mexico Department of Finance and Administration announced today that low energy prices had eroded revenue expectations for the budget year starting in July. Economists from three executive agencies and the Legislature agreed on the new estimate. This means next year's budget will be essentially a no-growth budget, with major cuts in some places and no room of increased healthcare and inflationary costs. Tell all legislators that public schools must be "held harmless" from any budget cuts.

### **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](#). 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. This ill-conceived public policy will be on the House floor tomorrow or Friday. On a bright note the ranking Republican member of the [Senate Education Committee](#), [Senator Gay Kernan](#), has withdrawn her support for the bill and now believes that one test score should not determine whether or not a child is retained in third grade.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 received a straight party-one do-pass in the [House Education Committee](#)'s on Wednesday; all republicans voting for this bad idea and all democrats voting against. [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. Since it has no other referrals, the bill heads to sure passage in the republican controlled House. Let all legislators, but especially members of the [Senate Education Committee](#), know that you oppose this attack on the quality of the teaching profession. That [Committee](#) will be our first chance to kill this bad idea when it reaches the Senate.

### **Higher minimum salaries**

[Senator Mimi Stewart's](#) measure to increase minimum salaries, [Senate Bill 14](#), was supposed to be heard in the [Senate Education Committee](#) this morning. However, faulty and conflicting financial analyses from legislative staff caused the measure to be held over until Friday or Monday.

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](#) Tuesday 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.

#### **Bill to change funding formula in Senate Education Committee on Friday**

[Senate Bill 141](#), sponsored by [Senator Howie Morales](#) and [Representative Dennis Roch](#), will make major changes in the public school funding formula. It will gradually increase the effect of at-risk units over the next five years, which should benefit schools with high-needs populations. It will reduce the ability of charter schools to take advantage of small-school adjustment units. It will also in FY 18 through FY 23 phase out the Training and Experience index and replace it with a Teacher Cost Index. The new index will be weighted by licensure level and years of experience, rather than education or degrees. The department, the legislative education study committee and the legislative finance committee shall jointly gather data, conduct an analysis and submit a report by November 1 of each year to study the effects of the changes and to recommend any changes to the index. While a fiscal analysis of the effect on each school district is not yet available, districts that have maximized the current system by requiring teachers to get advanced degrees and education will be disadvantaged. One million dollars is appropriated to the PED to mitigate any cuts to districts or charter schools caused by respective program cost calculations that have resulted solely from the implementation of provisions of the act over the next three years. In FY 17 districts would be guaranteed their FY 16 appropriation. In FY 18, 75% of the FY 16 funding and finally in FY 19 at least 50% of their FY 16 funding. After that the changes would simply be allowed to operate on their own.

Changes to the funding formula describe how the money appropriated to the school equalization guarantee will be distributed. They do not affect the total amount of funding available to districts. Unless new funding is added above the line in the formula, after the hold-harmless funding goes away, there will be winners and losers among the state's school districts.

NEA-New Mexico is still researching the effects of the changes and has taken no stand on [Senate Bill 141](#).