

Legislative Update, Wednesday, January 24, 2018

Tobacco Tax Bill to Fund Public School Support Moves to Next Committee

[Senate Bill 25](#) will receive a do-pass recommendation from the [Senate Education Committee](#) on a straight party line vote this morning, Democrats supporting and Republicans opposing. This measure was introduced by [Senator Howie Morales](#) in the Senate and co-introduced by [Representative Liz Thompson](#). Senate Bill 25 increases the excise tax on cigarettes from \$1.66 per pack of 20 cigarettes to \$3.16 per pack. The qualifying tribal cigarette tax is increased from \$0.75 per pack of 20 cigarettes to \$2.25 per pack. The bill increases the excise tax on other tobacco products from 25 percent of the product value to 76 percent of the product value and includes e-cigarettes in the definition of tobacco products. The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) estimates that changes in Senate Bill 25 will result in \$80.2 million in distributions to the public school fund in FY19. In FY18, general fund appropriations for public schools totaled \$2.696 billion, or 44.3 percent of total general fund appropriations. The intent of the legislation is to increase the overall share of general fund appropriations for public schools. Tobacco use remains the single largest cause of preventable death and disease in our state. An estimated 2,600 New Mexicans die from tobacco-related illnesses each year including cancer, heart disease, and respiratory illnesses. It will be heard next in the [Senate Corporations and Transportation Committee](#). Although it is not scheduled yet, call committee members and other Senators and tell them why this is an important funding measure for public schools and an important measure for health care in New Mexico.

A Joint Hearing of the Senate and House Education Committees will be held on Saturday, February 3. This is a unique opportunity for educators to directly share your stories of the opportunities your students lose when our state fails them with insufficient spending (even this year's miniscule increases won't make up the cumulative effects of underfunding). The Hearing is 10 a.m. to 1 p.m., Room t.b.a. (but come early to sign-in). We

are pleased to announce our special guest from the NEA Executive Committee Member George Sheridan will join our NEA-NM President Patterson for a press conference at 9 a.m. NEA-NM members are invited to attend (and receive a breakfastburrito),o room t.b.a. [Click here to register.](#)