

Legislative Update, January 29, 2018

Budget Picture Improves

The [House Appropriations and Finance Committee](#) created a proposed General Appropriations Act over the weekend. Based on older projections, the governor had proposed a 1.5 percent increase in pay for state employees and 2 percent for teachers. The Legislative Finance Committee had proposed a 1 percent raise across the board for school employees and to raise the minimum salaries for teachers. The draft budget approved Saturday calls for a 2 percent raise for state and school employees. Public safety staff such as state police, corrections officers, parole officers and prosecutors would get an additional 4.5 percent. Court staff, social workers and nurses would get an additional 2.5 percent. Teachers would get an extra 0.5 percent. Follow this link for more details from [The Santa Fe New Mexican](#). We also support a permanent change to teacher minimum salaries. [Senate Bill 119](#) sponsored by [Senator Mimi Stewart](#) and co-sponsored by Senators [Gay Kernan](#) and [Bill Soules](#), will increase the minimum for each licensure tier for teachers as follows: tier 1: \$36,000; tier 2: \$44,000; and tier 3: \$54,000. This measure received a unanimous do-pass in [the Senate Education Committee](#) Friday and is on its way to [Senate Finance Committee](#). Call all [committee](#) members to support this important change. The [General Appropriations Act, House Bill 2, is at this link](#). The changes proposed on Saturday are not yet posted, but will be before the measure reaches the floor of the House, likely on Wednesday. Let [House members](#) that this is a great improvement, but that we can afford to go further in providing sufficient funding for our state's public education system!

Less likely to make it all the way through the legislature is [House Bill 63](#), sponsored by [Representative James Townsend](#), which would restore the school district cash balances taken by the legislature as a solvency measure last year. Restoring these funds would go a long way toward giving school districts much needed financial flexibility. The measure next goes to the [House Appropriations and Finance Committee](#) where it will likely have a tough time. However, returning these funds to districts will go a long way to providing some financial breathing room for school districts. Call committee members with the message that school districts gave up

reserves to help the state maintain its reserves, now that the state once again has healthy reserves, this money should be returned to public schools!

Tobacco Tax to Fund Public Schools Will Be in Committee on Wednesday

[Senate Bill 25](#) will be heard next in the [Senate Corporations and Transportation Committee](#) on Wednesday. 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. 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. Conservative Democrats on the committee need to hear from us! It is especially important that we call [Senator Mary Kay Papan](#) of Las Cruces, [Senator Benny Schendo](#) of Jemez Pueblo, and [Senator Clemente Sanchez](#) of Grants. Please use the links embedded in the names in the previous sentence to get their office phone numbers. Everyone should call, but calls from constituents are especially important before the Thursday afternoon meeting

Come to Santa Fe February 3 to Talk to Legislators

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. in the Capitol Rotunda. NEA-NM members are invited to attend and receive a breakfast burrito. Meet in the Capitol Rotunda. [Click here to register.](#)