Legislative Update #13

Budget

House Bill 2, the General Appropriations Act, is now in the Senate Finance Committee. Democrats in the House tried unsuccessfully to amend the budget and increase funding for public schools and deny funding for the Governor's merit pay plan. They fell short on party-line votes. The final vote on the budget is at this link. Most democrats opposed the budget bill on the final vote, but a few voted for the package.

The final budget as passed by the House is essentially flat with a .9% increase in the public school funding formula funds. The only real increases from last year are to pay for fixed costs and a new base salary for level one teachers of $34,000. The only other salary increases are a continuation of last year's merit pay pilot at $9 million below the line, meaning it will not pass through the school funding formula; it will be doled out by the Public Education Department, based on applications by districts. It is not too early to ask the Senate Finance Committee to increase funding to public schools along the lines recommended by House Democrats and move the $9 million above the line into the funding formula to provide at least a token salary increase to all employees, instead of merit pay for a few!

The Senate Finance Committee accepted proposed amendments to House Bill 2 last week, then the committee will decide on its version of the Budget. That process could happen at any time. NEA-New Mexico is worked with Senator Howie Morales to craft an amendment to move the merit pay funds and some other money above the line to produce a token .8% salary increase for school employees. That amendment has been submitted to the Senate Finance Committee. Thank Senator Morales for working to provide the salary increase. Call Senate Finance Committee members and ask them to support Senator Morales’ amendment to stop the Governor’s merit pay plan and provide at least a token salary increase.