

Nearly fifty members from around the state traveled to Santa Fe on Saturday to talk to members of the New Mexico Senate about the measures described in this update. The members discussed the issues at the NEA-New Mexico Headquarters building and then traveled to the State Capitol to meet with Senators. NEA-New Mexico coordinated this lobby day for influencing the Senate because most decisions regarding public education are now up to the Senate. We need to make sure Senators know about many bad ideas that have been passed by the very partisan House of Representatives.

Please join your colleagues and let your [Senator](#) know that we oppose these measures:

The idea behind [HB 41](#), SCHOOL GRADE PROMOTION & RETENTION, sponsored by Representative [Monica Youngblood](#), has already been tabled in the [Senate Public Affairs Committee](#). 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.

[HB 71](#), STREAMLINE TEACHER & ADMINISTRATOR LICENSURE, sponsored by Representative [Tim D. Lewis](#), purports to simply streamline education licensure. However, it actually lowers standards for movement into administration by allowing anyone who is participating in a department-approved administrator preparation program to immediately become a school administrator for five years, whether or not they continue or complete the program!

[HB 76](#), TEACHER LICENSURE LEVELS & ADVANCEMENT, sponsored by Representative [Dennis J. Roch](#), drastically changes our current teacher licensure system into a merit pay system. It also places much of the current ill-conceived teacher evaluation rule in statute. This legislation appears to be statute implementing a rule, when in reality the opposite ought to be true; rules should implement statutes!

[HB 144](#), TEACHER & SCHOOL LEADER EFFECTIVENESS ACT, sponsored by Representative [James E. Smith](#), makes student standardized test scores count for a full forty per cent of as teacher's evaluation, higher even than the thirty-five percent under the current teacher evaluation rule! The measure essentially puts the current teacher evaluation rule written by the Public Education Department into statute. It does little to overcome the wide-spread objections to that rule.

The House has also sent [HB 181, an Adjunct Instructor Bill](#), will be heard Monday in the [Senate Education Committee](#). The measure, sponsored by [Rep. Conrad James](#), would allow for adjunct instruction of students by non-licensed people with "expertise" in a subject area. As educators, we know that it takes far more than subject expertise to adequately teach our students. This bill would not only lower the standards required of teachers, but would also demean the profession of teaching by implying that just any warm body with a degree can do the work with no training whatsoever. A companion bill to [HB 181](#) in the Senate, [SB 228](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ron Griqgs](#), was tabled in [Senate Judiciary Committee](#) earlier in the session.

Another bad idea expected to make its way to the Senate is [House Bill 333](#), sponsored by [Rep. R.J. Strickler](#), which will likely pass the Republican-controlled House this weekend. [House Bill 333](#) creates a voucher program masquerading as a scholarship for low income students to attend private schools in the New Mexico. It also creates a tax credit for individuals and corporations to fund a scholarship organization. These scholarship organizations then provide a voucher using 90% of the state funds for low income students to attend private schools and keep 10% of the state funds for themselves! This is bad public policy and probably violates the New Mexico Constitution!

Budget

[House Bill 2, the General Appropriations Act](#), is awaiting a vote in the full Senate. This could happen as early as Monday. 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. The [Senate Finance Committee](#) increased funding to public schools by \$2.5 million to help pay for increased enrollment and fixed costs and added \$1.5 million for K-3 Plus.

NEA-New Mexico 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 in [Senate Finance Committee](#). That amendment was not adopted by the committee.

Ask Senators to remove the merit pay provisions and add a salary increase for all school employees.