

Here is the current location of some very bad ideas.

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. This legislation is awaiting a hearing in the [Senate Public Affairs Committee](#).

[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! This measure is currently tabled in the [Senate Education Committee](#). Two improved versions of the measure that have dealt with our objections are still alive.

[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! This measure is tabled in the [Senate Education Committee](#).

[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. Despite late night attempts to reach compromise on this bill between President Patterson and Executive Director Bowyer and several other parties, the best place for it is its current grave as tabled in the [Senate Education Committee](#).

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. This bill has been sent with no recommendation to the [Senate Judiciary Committee](#). Where a companion bill, [SB 228](#), sponsored by [Sen. Ron Griggs](#), was tabled earlier in the session.

Another bad idea waiting in the Senate is [House Bill 333](#), sponsored by [Rep. R.J. Strickler](#); it passed the Republican-controlled House. [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! The House vote is [at this link](#). The bill is awaiting a hearing in the [Senate Education Committee](#), where we hope it will still be waiting when the legislature adjourns!

Budget

[House Bill 2, the General Appropriations Act](#), has been passed by the Senate. Earlier, 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](#).

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. The Senate vote is [at this link](#).

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.

The measure is on the House concurrence calendar. If the House votes to concur with the Senate amendments, the bill goes to the Governor. If not, there will be a conference committee between the House and the Senate to try to iron out the differences in the two houses' versions of the bill. The only good news is, that unlike many of our neighbors, we have no cuts to school funding and at least some increases for fixed costs and enrollment growth.