

Legislative Update, February 1, 2018

Budget Awaiting Senate Action

[The House](#) voted 65-3 after less than an hour of debate to pass House Bill 2, the [General Appropriations Act, House Bill 2](#). It will increase state spending by about \$249 million over current levels – or roughly 4.1 percent. The bill now moves on to the [Senate](#), with just over two weeks left in the ongoing 30-day legislative session. The Bill will be heard in [the Senate Finance Committee](#). This committee will likely consider amendments for the next few days and possibly consider the bill over the weekend. Most public employees have not received a pay raise since 2014; the budget passed by the House would provide about \$90 million in total compensation increases. That includes a 2 percent salary increase for rank-and-file state workers and even larger pay bumps for State Police, corrections officers and judicial branch employees. Teachers would get a 2.5 percent pay raise, and starting teacher pay would go from \$34,000 to \$36,000 a year. Minimum pay levels for more experienced teachers would be raised as in Senate Bill 119 (see below). Other school employees would get a 2% raise. The budget plan also calls for more than 10 percent of state spending — or nearly \$643 million — to be set aside in cash reserves. As it sits now, in addition to the funding for public education, the budget fully funds Medicaid—the health insurance program for low-income kids, seniors, and those with disabilities—and child care assistance.

Members of [Senate Finance Committee](#) will likely make amendments to the budget. Call all [committee](#) member and ask them to support the increased school funding and to consider higher salary increases to help cover increased health insurance costs.

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](#) last week and is on its way to [Senate Finance Committee](#). Call all [committee](#) members to support this important change.

Ask Senators to Remove or Decrease the Amount in the Budget for the Governor's Merit Pay Plan

The budget bill has \$5million set aside for the Governor's merit pay plan. It is not likely that the entire amount can be removed and still get the governor's signature on a final budget package. However, ask members of the [Senate Finance Committee](#) to move at least \$1.5 million of the funding into the above the line funding , the School Equalization Guarantee (SEG). That would fund this bad idea at the same amount as last year. Here are some talking points:

New Mexico's teachers' salaries are, on average, below those of teachers in other states and comparable professionals within the state: Average salary (2017) – New Mexico's average teacher salary is \$47,500, and ranks 45th nationally. (Source: NEA Rankings and Estimates)

Average starting salary (2016) – New Mexico's average starting salary is \$34,544, and ranks 36th nationally. The average maximum salary is \$60,621, and also ranks 36th (Source: NEA CBMA salary database)

EPI "Teaching Penalty" - On average, New Mexico teachers earn 66% of what comparable professionals (with similar education and skills) earn. (Source: Economic Policy Institute, 2016).

Instead of implementing expensive and ineffective pay-for-performance pay plans, New Mexico and its school districts should focus on professional pay and pay systems that reward professional growth.

A Couple of Bad Bills to Oppose

Two very anti-labor Republican sponsored bills will soon be heard in the [Labor and Economic Development Committee](#). [House Bill 189, State Law Over Private Sector Employment Bill](#) would stop local governments from enacting minimum wage ordinances and will be in committee on Monday, February 5. [House bill 169, Employee Preference Act](#) is a

traditional anti-union right-to-work bill and will be in committee on Wednesday, February 7. The committee meets at 1:30 in Room 315. Let committee members know that we oppose these bad anti-worker ideas!

Come to Santa Fe Saturday!

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 307. (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.](#)