

Legislative Update, Weekend, February 10-11, 2018

Awaiting Senate Action

[The General Appropriations Act, House Bill 2](#) is awaiting Senate action. As passed by the House, it will increase state spending by about \$249 million over current levels – or roughly 4.1 percent. The Bill will be heard in the Senate Finance Committee. This committee is debating amendments. Most public employees have not received a pay raise since 2014; the budget passed by the House provides about \$90 million in total compensation increases. 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. We hear this raise may yet be increased in the Senate so that all school employees would get 2 ½%. More than 10 percent of state spending — or nearly \$643 million — would be set aside in cash reserves. 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.

A permanent change to teacher minimum salaries is on its way too. Two bills move us forward:

(1) [Senate Bill 11](#) 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.

ACTION REQUEST: [Call all committee members to support this important change, and to support efforts to restore \\$42 million of District cash balances that were raided last year to cover State budget expenses \(not education\).](#)

Salary Bill Defeated in House Education Committee, Senate Bill 119 Still Alive

[HB 310](#), was tabled in the House Education Committee, sponsored by Representatives Alonzo Baldonado and Jim Smith. It would have amended the School Personnel Act to increase the statutory minimum teacher salaries and provide for minimum teacher salaries of \$38 thousand for level 1 teachers, \$44 thousand for level 2 teachers, and \$54 thousand for level 3-A teachers and appropriates \$71.6 million to fund the increased minimum salaries. It would provide \$5 million in grants for school districts and charter schools to design and implement teacher recruitment initiatives, which though vague and insufficient to address the enormous teacher shortage; it had language we supported attached to it: "The department shall distribute the money based upon local needs and shall not consider school grades and the results of the teacher evaluation approved by the New Mexico public education department.

Early Childhood Funding In Senate Finance Committee

[HJR1, the constitutional amendment for Early Childhood Education](#) to receive a payout from the Land Grant Permanent Fund passed on a 7-6 vote this morning in Senate Education Committee. Next stop, and hopefully not the last, is Senate Finance Committee, where it has yet to be scheduled. A similar, but smaller in scope, resolution, Senator John Sapien's [SJR 7 "Severance Tax Fund For Early Childhood"](#) has also passed a Committee. It is uncertain it will be heard in other committees. ACTION REQUEST: Please call these [Committee members to ask for their support for HJR1](#):

Chair John Arthur Smith: 986-4365

Senator Pete Campos: 986-4311

Senator John Sapien: 986-4301

Senator George Munoz: 986-4371

Senator Carlos Cisneros: 986-4362

Tobacco Tax Bill Dead

Senate Bill 25 has been tabled by the Senate Corporations and Transportation Committee, when Senator Mary Kay Papen voted with committee Republicans to oppose the bill. The measure was introduced by Senator Howie Morales in the Senate and co-introduced by Representative Liz Thompson. SB 25 would have increased the excise tax on cigarettes from \$1.66 per pack of 20 cigarettes to \$3.16 per pack. The intent was to increase the overall share of general fund appropriations for public schools (which is still declining in HB2- see above).