

Legislative Update, February 2, 2018

Budget 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 will likely consider amendments for the next few days and possibly consider the bill over the weekend or early next week. 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. See talking points in yesterday's update below.

[Senator Howie Morales](#) has, at NEA-NM's request, introduced an amendment to the budget bill moving \$1.5 million of the merit pay money into the SEG. Thank the senator for his efforts.

School Employee Minimum Wage Bill Clears One Hurdle, Not Likely to Survive Senate Finance

[Senate Bill 57](#), sponsored by [Senator Daniel Ivey-Sotto](#), would increase classified school employees minimum wage to \$16 per hour beginning in fiscal year 20. It passed [the Senate Education Committee](#) on a party-line vote this morning. The bill next goes to [Senate Finance](#) where a \$61 million price tag will almost certainly doom it. However, it is subject that must be in the legislative conversation. Tell [Finance Committee](#) members that the lowest paid school employees need a living wage!

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.

Tobacco Tax to Fund Public Schools May Be in Committee Next Week

[Senate Bill 25](#) has been on and then off the schedule of the [Senate Corporations and Transportation Committee](#). Right now it looks like it may be on the committee schedule for Wednesday, February 7. The measure was introduced by [Senator Howie Morales](#) in the Senate and co-introduced by [Representative Liz Thompson](#). Senate Bill 25 increases the excise tax on cigarettes from \$1.66 per pack of 20 cigarettes to \$3.16 per pack. The qualifying tribal cigarette tax is increased from \$0.75 per pack of 20 cigarettes to \$2.25 per pack. The bill increases the excise tax on other tobacco products from 25 percent of the product value to 76 percent of the product value and includes e-cigarettes in the definition of tobacco products. The Legislative Finance Committee (LFC) estimates that changes in Senate Bill 25 will result in \$80.2 million in distributions to the public school fund in FY19. In FY18, general fund appropriations for public schools totaled \$2.696 billion, or 44.3 percent of total general fund appropriations. The intent of the legislation is to increase the overall share of general fund appropriations for public schools. Tobacco use remains the single largest cause of preventable death and disease in our state. An estimated 2,600 New Mexicans die from tobacco-related illnesses each year including cancer, heart disease, and respiratory illnesses. Call [committee members and other Senators and tell them why this is an important funding measure for public schools and an important measure for health care in New Mexico.](#)

Come to Santa Fe Tomorrow

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.](#)