

Final Legislative Update, 2018

READ THIS! One hundred and twelve New Mexico legislators made major decisions directly affecting you, your students and your school and district.

Here is the good news: progress was made for our students and members this session. The #TeacherVoiceNM was heard clearer than ever! Your ongoing engagement about student learning conditions and educator working conditions created the context in which both the Governor and the legislature proposed increases in education spending overall and raises for employees too.

Here are the opportunities: this Spring you and your Local have important collective bargaining opportunities to build on the session's progress.

Then, after eight years of teacher-bashing, standardized test-focused policies, you and your colleagues have critically important opportunities to work for a much more education-friendly legislature and governor in 2019 to make possible the many positive improvements we hope our students can gain so much from. Major progress can only be achieved by working together in strong NEA Local affiliates and across New Mexico.

This thirty-day session focused on the state budget.

NEA-NM members focused on addressing student needs!

The New Mexico Legislature sent a \$6.3 billion budget plan (HB 2) to Governor Martinez that would slightly boost spending on public schools. Looked at from an institutional perspective (as "the public schools"), a 2.3% increase in public school funding to \$2.7 billion is very significant, and after years of under-funding the schools, every dollar is much needed.

However, seen from the perspective of educators and what we know are the enormous unmet resource needs of New Mexico students, the budget leaves huge gaps that hold our students back.

The overall share of the state budget dedicated for public schools declined this year, because roads and other priorities grew more!

Missing from the budget are resources to provide every student with: individualized attention with smaller class sizes; fully supported IEP services delivered with more counselors, social workers and other ancillary professionals; educators continually improving through high quality professional development and mentoring; sufficient P.E., Art, Music and other electives and more Career and Technical opportunities; and modern texts and computer resources.

Minimum teacher three-tier salaries are increased by two thousand dollars each.

NEA-NM members won this victory (with support of legislative allies)!

Teacher pay will increase by 2.5 percent and other school employees pay would increase by an average of 2% allowing some discretion to individual school districts on assigning raises. Individual teachers should receive the higher dollar value of either the 2.5% raise or the increased minimum salary for their licensure level.

Local NEA affiliates with highly engaged members are best positioned to negotiate for fair raises for all employees given our collective bargaining relationships.

While the legislature restored many balances it raided during last year's fiscal crisis, it decided public school cash balances need not be fully restored. Under the budget plan, \$5 million in cash balances swept last year from public school district accounts is restored this year (about 12% of the total). Another change in how districts are funded: the at-risk funding factor in the SEG ("funding formula") will be increased. Also, the budget has language to "grandfather" in all four-day week districts in place now, while stopping other districts from starting four-day schedules.

Other Education Legislation This Session You Should Know About:

- NEA-NM supported SB 119 Increase Teacher Minimum Salaries (D-Mimi Stewart, R-Gay Kernan, D-Bill Soules) –Though the appropriations are also included in the (HB2) budget, this bill puts into statute, new minimum Teacher salaries for level one (\$36,000), level two (\$44,000) and level three-A (\$54,000). Passed, thank you!

- NEA-NM supported HJR1 (D-Javier Martinez, D-Moe Maestas, D-Garcia Richard), a constitutional amendment to channel a 1 percent increased "payout" from the Land Grant specifically to support Early Childhood Education. It would have the "payout" go to public schools for two years before going fully for ECE. It would have added \$175 million for early childhood programs in the public schools or through Native American

tribes or Pueblos. This passed the House, then the Senate Education Committee, but had no hearing in Senate Finance.

- NEA-NM supported HB 310 (R-Alonzo Baldonado, R-Jim Smith) after an amendment to be sure no form of “merit pay” programs would be used to target \$5 million for “teacher recruitment: “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.” It would also have increased the statutory minimum teacher salaries to \$38,000 for level 1 teachers, and to the same amounts for Level 2 and 3-A as in SB 119. With few days left in the session, had it not been tabled in House Education Committee, it would have “died” regardless.

- Twenty-one NEA-New Mexico members had a huge impact on the One hundred and twelve legislators by raising their #TeacherVoiceNM to talk about the impact on student success of the continued underfunding of the public schools: see their inspiring statements here: <https://www.facebook.com/NEANM1886/>

NEA-NM supported SB 157 Phased-In Teacher Cost Index (D-Howie C. Morales, R- D-George Dodge, Jr.) - District-level funding through the S.E.G. (“funding formula”) is connected in part to the teachers’ qualifications and experience. Having passed, the district’s teachers’ years of experience remains a factor, while licensure level replaces degrees attained as a factor.

- NEA-NM supported SB 30 Change Capital Outlay Funding Formula (D-Mimi Stewart) – This bill changes the way project funding requests are treated to consider a district’s own capacity for raising needed funds for capital outlay – to favor districts for state aid which have less local capacity.

- NEA-NM supported SB 25 Tobacco Tax for Public Education (D-Howie Morales, D-Liz Thomson). Tabled by the Senate Corporations and Transportation Committee, it would have increased the excise tax on cigarettes \$1.50 per pack. The intent was to increase the overall share of the budget dedicated for public schools (still declining in HB2- see above).

- NEA-NM opposed HB 98 Local Election Act (R-Paul C. Bandy, D-Daniel A. Ivey-Soto and R-James E. Smith) –Having passed, this bill will move school district elections to June. The bill allows for districts to call a special election (in February) for bonds and mil levies instead of June.

- NEA-NM supported two bills for more school security (both passed):

- Senate Memorial 8 (D-Jeff Steinborn) requests the Public Education Department and the Legislative Education Study Committee (LESC) study potential solutions to decrease the rates of suicide by firearms and gun violence in schools and report findings to the LESC by 10-1-2018;
- SB 239 School Capital Outlay for Security (D-George K. Munoz) Allowing for money in the public-school capital outlay fund for school security system repairs, renovations and replacement.