

TEA Stands Up for Education Support Professionals! Bill Would Help With ESP Health Insurance Premiums

Legislation which would authorize the General Assembly to set a minimum level of financial contributions by Local Education Agencies (LEAs) for support staff health insurance premiums passed two committees this week, but still has several “hurdles” to clear. The legislation received a “recommendation for passage” by the Council on Pensions and Insurance on Monday, March 22 and passed the K-12 Subcommittee on Wednesday, March 24. **SB 3125/HB 3193** would require LEAs to pass on funding received through the Basic Education Program (BEP) to partially assist with health insurance premiums for education support professionals (ESPs). The BEP formula provides funding of insurance premiums for both teachers and support staff. The teacher amount is currently 45% while the support staff factor is 30% of the total premium. LEAs can, of course, supplement this state funding and most do. Most school systems are making contributions for support staff in excess of the 30% paid by the state. Information provided by the state insurance administration indicates that 30 school systems are making contributions of less than 30% -- and five school systems do not make coverage available for their support staff. This legislation is intended to help under-paid education support staff secure health insurance coverage through at least a minimal level of employer financial support.

As stated above, the law now requires school systems to pay at least 45% of the premium for teachers, but **this requirement does not apply to support personnel**. An amendment placed on the bill in the Council on Pensions and Insurance would “phase in” the requirement that LEAs partially fund the premium for ESP insurance. In order to lessen the financial impact on LEAs, the Council amendment postpones the effective date to 2012, sets a minimum of 10% as the required contribution for 2012, and provides for incremental 5% increases. **HB 3193** is scheduled for a vote in the both the House and Senate Education Committees on Wednesday, March 31. It is essential that TEA members contact both education committees and ask that they vote “**YES**” on this legislation. **SB 3125** is sponsored by Sen. Charlotte Burks (D-Monterey) and **HB 3193** is sponsored by Rep. Johnny Shaw (D-Bolivar). Contact information for both the Senate and House Education Committees was in the February 5 TEA Legislative Report. To access this information, members should go to www.teateachers.org, click on “publications”, “legislative reports”, and then “archives”.

3% Teacher Bonus Far from Being a “Done Deal” Attempts Could be Made to Eliminate/Shift Funds

As previously discussed in this report, Governor Bredesen’s proposed budget for 2010-2011 protects BEP funding (except for capital outlay growth) and contains considerable new monies to provide for increased health insurance premiums, and to protect the actuarial soundness of the Tennessee Consolidated Retirement System (TCRS). In addition, the budget contains a proposed \$68 million to provide for a 3% bonus for teachers. This bonus would be based on positions generated by the Basic Education Program (BEP) which would reduce the 3% amount once it is spread among all teachers. TEA has publicly commended Gov. Bredesen for protecting K-12 education – and employee positions –

Assembly when it votes on the appropriations bill for 2010-2011. Reports have circulated on Capitol Hill that there may be efforts to try to take part of the \$68 million budgeted for the employee bonus in order to fund other programs. **TEA will strongly oppose any effort to reduce the education budget and will fight to keep the 3% bonus intact.** As budget discussions “heat up” over the next month, TEA members must let the legislature know that our Association supports the proposed fiscal 2011 budget. **Members are urged to contact all legislators ask them to support Governor’s education budget and oppose any changes which would negatively impact education or education employees.** A critical “first hurdle” for the budget will be the Budget Subcommittee of the House Finance Committee. If your legislator serves on this key subcommittee, they need to hear from you! Contact information for the Budget Subcommittee is listed below.

Budget Subcommittee of House Finance, Ways & Means			
LP = Legislative Plaza		WMB = War Memorial Building	
Address for all members is Nashville, TN 37243			
All legislators may be reached by telephone at 1-800-449-8366.			
You must then enter the last five digits of their office phone number.			
Member (Party & District)	Office	Phone Area Code (615)	E-Mail Address (Please include your name, postal address, and phone number in your e-mail.)
Chairman <u>Tindell</u> , Harry J. (D-13)	33 LP	741-2031	rep.harry.tindell@capitol.tn.gov
Vice Chairman <u>Sargent</u> , Charles (R-61)	206 WMB	741-6808	rep.charles.sargent@capitol.tn.gov
<u>Armstrong</u> , Joe E. (D-15)	25 LP	741-0768	rep.joe.armstrong@capitol.tn.gov
<u>DeBerry</u> , Lois M. (D-91)	15 LP	741-3830	rep.lois.deberry@capitol.tn.gov
<u>Fitzhugh</u> , Craig (D-82)	33 LP	741-2134	rep.craig.fitzhugh@capitol.tn.gov
Harrison, Michael (R-9)	206 WMB	741-7480	rep.mike.harrison@capitol.tn.gov
<u>McDaniel</u> , Steve (R-72)	115 WMB	741-0750	rep.steve.mcdaniel@capitol.tn.gov
<u>Montgomery</u> , Richard (R-12)	201 WMB	741-5981	rep.richard.montgomery@capitol.tn.gov
<u>Mumpower</u> , Jason (R-3)	103 WMB	741-2050	rep.jason.mumpower@capitol.tn.gov
Naifeh, Speaker Emeritus Jimmy (D-81)	G19A WMB	741-3774	spk.eme.jimmy.naifeh@capitol.tn.gov
Odom, Gary (D-55)	18A LP	741-4410	rep.gary.odom@capitol.tn.gov
<u>Roach</u> , Dennis E. (R-35)	217 WMB	741-2534	rep.dennis.roach@capitol.tn.gov
<u>Rowland</u> , Donna (R-34)	207 WMB	741-2804	rep.donna.rowland@capitol.tn.gov
<u>Shaw</u> , Johnny (D-80)	33 LP	741-4538	rep.johnny.shaw@capitol.tn.gov

Status Report on Selected Education Bills

- **Vouchers – HB 3688/SB 2741** -- by Rep. J DeBerry (D-Memphis) and Sen. Brian Kelsey (R-Germantown). Would set up a voucher program for private and religious schools. TEA strongly opposes. Scheduled for House Government Operations calendar on March 31 and pending in the Senate Education Committee.
- **For Profit School Management – HB 3118/SB 3029** -- by Rep. Bill Dunn (R-Knoxville)

March 31.

- **Teacher Non-renewal Date Change – HB 2772/SB 3067** -- by Rep. Richard Montgomery (R-Sevierville) and Sen. Jamie Woodson (R-Knoxville). Changes the date to notify teachers of non-renewal from April 15 to May 15. TEA does not oppose. Passed the House 96-0 on March 22, 2010 and scheduled for the Senate Education Committee calendar on March 31.
- **Opens TVAAS Data – HB 1739/SB 1974** – by Rep. Stacey Campfield (R-Knoxville) and Sen. Sen. Tim Burchett (R-Knoxville). Would make individual teacher’s TVAAS scores public information. TEA strongly opposes. Pending in the House and Senate Education Committees.
- **Personal Leave Approval – HB 3107/SB 2630** – by Rep. Gerald McCormick (R-Chattanooga) and Sen. Dolores Gresham (R-Somerville). Requires approval by director (or his/her designee) before taking personal leave on days scheduled for parent-teacher conferences or in-service days. Amendment proposed by TEA requires dates covered by this legislation to be on a calendar approved prior to the start of the school year. TEA does not oppose amended bill. Scheduled for House floor on Thursday, March 31 and passed the Senate as amended 23-9 on Thursday, March 25.
- **Teacher Code of Ethics – HB 3130/SB 2416** – by Rep. Beth Harwell (R-Nashville) and Sen. Dolores Gresham (R-Somerville). Places TEA’s current Code of Ethics into state law. TEA does not oppose. Scheduled the House Education Committee calendar on March 31. Passed the Senate as amended 33-0 on March 3, 2010.
- **Physical “Activity” Expansion – HB 836/SB 1774** – by Rep. Gary Moore (D-Joelton) and Sen. Roy Herron (D-Dresden). Would require thirty minutes of non-specified physical activity per day. TEA strongly opposes. Failed in K-12 Subcommittee of House Education. Pending in the Senate Education Committee.
- **Kindergarten Entrance Age – HB 2820/SB 3208** – by Rep. Ty Cobb (D-Columbia) and Sen. Lowe Finney (D-Jackson). Would require children entering kindergarten to be age five prior to August 1. TEA opposes reduction in education funding tied to legislation Failed to pass on vote of 5-5 in K-12 Subcommittee of House Education and pending in Senate Education Committee.
- **School Start Date – HB 2996/SB 3088** – by Rep. John Deberry (D-Memphis) and Sen. Tim Burchett (R-Knoxville). Would require all schools to start after the fifth Monday in August. TEA opposes. Scheduled for K-12 Subcommittee calendar of House Education Committee on March 31 and scheduled for the Senate Education Committee calendar on April 7.
- **Study on Parental Involvement/Student Accountability – HB 2810/SB 2729** by Rep. Mike McDonald (D-Portland) and Sen. Andy Berke (D-Chattanooga). Amended bill requires Office of Education Accountability to study how other states incorporate parental involvement and student accountability into teacher evaluation procedures. TEA strongly supports. Passed the House as amended 94-0 on March 22 and the Senate 31-0 on March 25.
- **School Defibrillators – HB 3250/SB 2505** by Rep. Bob Ramsey (R-Maryville) and Sen. Doug Overbey (R-Maryville). Requires LEAs to place automated exterior defibrillators (AED) devices in each school. Mandates placement in certain locations and requires each LEA to review the defibrillators annually to ensure that they are in working condition.

- Legislation which would allow home-schooled students to participate in public school extra-curricular activities is scheduled in the K-12 Subcommittee of the House Education Committee for Wednesday, March 31. Two bills, **HB 3745** by Rep. Jason Mumpower (R-Bristol) and **HB 797** by Rep. Stacey Campfield (R-Knoxville) are on the calendar. TEA opposes both!
- **HB 3869** by Rep. Ulysses Jones (D-Memphis) would allow any “at risk” student to attend a charter school and is scheduled in K-12 Subcommittee for March 31. TEA opposes!
- **HB 2996** by Rep. John Deberry (D-Memphis) would require all schools to open no earlier than “the fourth Monday in August” and is scheduled K-12 Subcommittee on March 31. TEA opposes!
- A bill to require approval to take personal leave on in-service or parent-teacher conference days passed the Senate on March 25. The bill was delayed in the House until Wednesday, March 31. A TEA-proposed amendment states that the calendar must be available prior to the beginning of the school year. Any date not on this calendar would not be covered by this law.
- Rep. Jeanne Richardson (D-Memphis) has been named to the House Education Committee to replace Rep. John Mark Windle (D-Livingston) who is on active duty in Iraq. Rep. Richardson’s contact information is: 26 Legislative Plaza, Nashville, TN 37243; Phone – 615-741-2010; e-mail – rep.jeannie.richardson@capitol.tn.gov

Due to the Good Friday Holiday, there will not be a TEA Legislative Report dated April 2. The next legislative report will be for the week ending April 9.