

Legislative Talking Points

Salary Increase

- Education will be the key to supplying a highly skilled workforce in West Virginia. High-quality public education systems attract business and industry to the state. A highly skilled workforce will not be possible without skilled teachers in our classrooms who are paid a competitive salary.
- Funding for education continues to fall. During the 1990s education was once 57 percent of the state budget; it has dropped to today's 43.7 percent. If we had maintained funding levels, then money would be available to maintain competitive pay and provide adequate supplies and programs to students.
- The average salary for a West Virginia teacher dropped from 30th in the nation in 1993 to 48th in the nation in 2007 and remains at 48th today. That's 10 years without any improvement.
- A student's greatest asset is a highly qualified, skilled teacher in the classroom. Attracting and retaining these professionals hinge on competitive pay. There are "well over 700" certified teaching vacancies in the state. West Virginia has teacher retention and teacher recruitment problems. Salary and benefits are the fundamental reason the state cannot attract and retain qualified teachers.
- According to the Economic Policy Institute, a West Virginia public school teacher earns 25 percent less than non-teacher college graduates in our state.

PEIA

- The Fiscal Year 2019 plan approved by the PEIA Finance Board in December again shifts all of the burden for health care costs to public employees and retirees. All of the gap will be funded through benefit cuts for employees and retirees.
- The upcoming PEIA plan changes make it more difficult to recruit and retain highly qualified teachers, education support professionals and other state employees.
- The state of West Virginia must realize that the cost of health care is ever increasing and like all good employers should provide for their employees without dumping all the cost on the backs of employees.
- People who need to use their PEIA health insurance coverage are impacted the most because of the higher deductibles, out-of-pocket costs, co-insurance costs and prescription drug changes.
- The Go365 program and Total Family Income requirements of the FY19 plan need to be eliminated.

Charter schools, vouchers and education savings accounts (ESAs)

- Charter schools, vouchers and education savings accounts (ESAs) take money away from traditional public schools. Our schools lost more than \$11 million statewide during a recent midyear cut and stands to lose at least another \$15 million in school-aid funding in the next fiscal year. We cannot properly fund our traditional public schools and charter schools, vouchers and ESAs will worsen the funding crisis.
- We need to improve our public schools and make quality education opportunities available for all students, not just a select few.
- Based on Census data, West Virginia ranks 42nd in the number of high school graduates, 50th in the percentage of adults with a bachelor's degree and 50th in the percentage of adults with an advanced degree. If we are to attract industry, we must provide a highly skilled and quality workforce. Hampering our already struggling schools by taking away funding will harm our ability to attract businesses and further weaken our state's economy.
- Unless the state is going to put additional money into the state budget for the voucher/ESA program, the money will come at the expense of our public schools.

WVEA Legislative Talking Points

Charters, vouchers and education savings accounts (ESAs) continued

- Public schools have lost state money because of charters, school vouchers and ESAs still have the same bills to pay for staff, facilities, curriculum and more. Many school systems are struggling to make ends meet and any additional loss of revenue will be devastating.
- Vouchers, charters and ESAs do not reduce public education costs. Actually, they increase costs by requiring taxpayers to fund two school systems, one public and one private. Our taxpayers are stretched thin enough without this additional burden.
- The term “education savings account - ESA” is intended to deceive. It is not the type of account that parents can contribute their own money into (think of the Smart 529 accounts). Instead, the money that goes into an education savings account is money that has been reallocated from the public school budget.

Seniority

- Seniority equates to experience. Veteran professionals in other careers (medical, law, etc.) are highly sought after for their experience, knowledge and skill. The same should be true of education. Experience in the classroom equates to a better grasp of the knowledge, skills and practice needed to help students succeed.
- Research has shown that teachers continue to improve on their craft through their twentieth year of teaching then reach a plateau. Even educators at the plateau level perform better than those in the beginning stages of their career.
- In the past, we had a system that did not use seniority in RIF and transfers. It was fraught with problems and was ultimately scrapped in favor of the one we currently use in order to have an objective process in place for employees.
- The removal of seniority takes us back to a system that uses subjective criteria for decision-making and brings in favoritism, nepotism and discrimination into determining which employee will be chosen.
- Veteran employees who have performed well in their job should have job security and not have their employment subject to random criteria.

Elimination of Payroll Deduction (SB 335)

- The only reason to pass a payroll deduction bill is to destroy a worker’s ability to organize and speak out by weakening labor unions and other employee organizations.
- The bill is clearly intended to silence your opposition to bad legislation and abuses from your employer. It is also meant to silence your voice when it comes to reasonable changes to public education that will benefit all children in West Virginia.
- Employees choose which payroll deductions to have and it is their choice. It creates no more work for a county to deduct for union dues than it does for any other deduction. Why allow some deductions and not others?
- Payroll deduction bills are “a solution in search of a problem,” but they also are intended to punish and are done solely for political purposes.
- Your paycheck is your money and you should be allowed to make deductions for the groups/businesses you select. This is clearly an overreach of government into your personal affairs.