

Legislative Talking Points

Funding for Public Education

- Funding for public education continues to fall. During the 1990s education was 57% of the state budget; it has dropped to less than 46% today. If the legislature had maintained funding levels, then money would be available to maintain competitive pay, provide adequate classroom supplies, lower class sizes, hire support services in our schools and offer more programs to our students.
- The funding formula for our public schools has not been significantly changed in the past 40 years. Yet, the issues that our schools deal with mirror the changes in society. We need to be able to add nurses, counselors, social workers, safety officers and others without subtracting from the number of teachers and service professionals allowed in the formula.
- West Virginia has significantly reduced the number of school buildings in the state through consolidation. But regardless of the number of buildings, they must be adequately maintained. Leaking roofs and antiquated HVAC systems desperately need to be replaced but there is no money provided in the formula for many of those costly repairs. Our public school cannot continue to limp along without proper funding. Our students suffer from the poor upkeep/air quality.
- Many of the changes to public education introduced in recent years actually take money away from our schools. Charter schools, vouchers and education savings accounts all take money from our already strapped local school systems in order to assist a small number of students.
- Legislators continue to talk about giving tax breaks to businesses. Those tax breaks harm our students and our public schools by taking money from the school systems. The two tax cuts most frequently mentioned are the business personal property tax and lowering of the coal severance tax. Lowering those two taxes could take \$247 million from state and local revenue. This is money that can be used to meet the needs of our students and our schools.