



Laura Belin <laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com>

The Grassley Bulletin - Big Wins in House File 2612

Speaker Pat Grassley <pat.grassley@legis.iowa.gov>
Reply-To: Speaker Pat Grassley <pat.grassley@legis.iowa.gov>
To: laurarbelin@bleedingheartland.com

Fri, Mar 22, 2024 at 12:29 PM

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To the People of House District 57

When we began the week, I thought Week 11 would be relatively quick. We are getting to the point of session where we've passed a lot of our priorities through the Iowa House, and we have to wait on negotiations with our partners in the Senate. However, negotiations went better than I expected this week on the AEA/teacher pay discussions that we've been having all session long. By the end of the week, we had passed House File 2612 with an amendment that represents the House's final position on this discussion.

The House has fought tooth and nail for a lot of the big wins in this legislation. Let's go through them.

Big Wins in [HF 2612](#):

This bill increases teacher salaries.

- This bill increases the minimum teacher pay to \$47,500 in the first year and \$50,000 in the second year. This will put Iowa's minimum teacher salary at 5th highest in the nation. When adjusted for cost of living, this puts Iowa's beginning teachers in a great spot compared to their peers.

- It also adds a second tier for minimum teacher pay. Teachers who have 12 years of experience can make no less than \$60,000 in year one and \$62,000 in year two. The addition of this second tier means a lot of new money particularly for rural schools.
- And finally, this bill allocates \$22.3 million for the teacher salary supplemental pot of money for schools so they can increase veteran teacher pay and help with the pay compaction concerns we have heard from some school districts.
- This is money that will be built into the base going forward, meaning it will increase with SSA in subsequent years.

This bill will incentivize retired teachers to help fill workforce gaps in schools.

- It contains a policy that allows retired teachers to return to the classroom without affecting their IPERS benefits. These teachers would be able to return to schools in a limited capacity after just one month of retirement. This will incentivize experienced teachers to return, perhaps as a substitute teacher, and alleviate some of the workforce struggles facing our schools.

This bill raises pay for paraprofessionals.

- It allocates \$14 million to increase pay for educational support staff. The Iowa House fought hard to have this proposal included in this legislation to raise the pay for our paraprofessionals who do such important, difficult work.

This bill contains a lot of new money for schools.

- In this bill, we set the SSA percentage increase at 2.5%. The House originally passed 3% SSA and that's certainly what we would've preferred to pass the Senate and be signed by the Governor. However, with a 2.5% SSA increase, the little over 110M increase to put toward salaries, and new funds we plan to allocate towards school safety, all that new money for schools equates to the equivalent of more than 5% SSA.

This bill creates a task force to study the best way to improve special education.

- The task force will review the current AEA system and look for areas for improvement. They will look for ways to improve services, consolidate buildings, provide effective oversight, eliminate redundancies and ultimately better outcomes for students.

This bill brings AEA chief salaries more in line with superintendents.

- This bill states that the AEA chiefs' salaries cannot exceed 125% of the average

superintendent's salaries within their region. Currently, the 9 chiefs each make around \$300,000 annually.

Let's Clear Up a Few Concerns

There have been a lot of moving parts as this bill has morphed throughout the legislative process. I want to alleviate some of the concerns that have circulated around past proposals.

- Because this bill requires school districts to use the AEAs for special education services, there will not be any disruption to special education services.
- It does not put the AEAs under the Department of Education.
- This bill does not terminate any employees of the AEA's.
- This bill does not prohibit the AEAs ability to perform any of the services they do now.

I know the Democrats are trying to say that the process was rushed because of the timeline of debate yesterday. Let me assure you - we have discussed these policies **extensively** with lowans, educators, and as a caucus. There wasn't anything in the final amendment that hadn't been debated previously in the Legislature. We took a lot of feedback from lowans in our crafting of this final package. We heard from parents, teachers, superintendents, the AEAs, the Department of Education and more. My hope is that this bill will pass the Senate soon and be signed by the Governor so we can move on to the other outstanding issues in front of us this legislative session.

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