

Legislative session draws to a close, three more bills head to governor's desk

Written by gallupsun
Saturday, 18 March 2023 09:44

Dear Editor,

The New Mexico legislature will adjourn at 12 pm March 18.

Both the House of Representatives and State Senate are still debating bills and may also do so the morning of Feb. 18, so a few more bills may yet pass this Legislative Session.

See all the movement of our AFT NM-supported bills below:

MARCH 16

State Senate

House Bill 533, carried by Rep. Ray Lara and Natalie Figueroa, would codify the levels of insurance coverage for educators which are currently provided for in House Bill 2, the FY '24 budget.

House Bill 533 also achieves another long-standing goal of AFT New Mexico – as it is currently written, it removes the insurance coverage cap that a district can provide its employees. Specifically, current law says a district “may cover up to 80%” however, HB 533 changes that maximum amount to “100%.” This means that if a district is already providing the maximum amount under statute of 80%, it could now provide more coverage if that is a decision that a local district wants to pursue or negotiate.

AFT New Mexico strongly supports HB 533 and supports the removal of the statutory coverage cap. The New Mexico State Senate approved HB 533 by a vote of 32-8. It now heads to the governor’s desk for her signature.

House Bill 126/a, sponsored by Reps. G. Andres Romero and T. Ryan Lane, seeks to adjust the state requirements for high school graduation. This legislation is a result of the work of the Legislative Education Study Committee, and our union has been part of the conversation and feedback as this bill has been developed.

Most notably, HB 126/a would remove the Algebra II requirement for graduation and allow local school districts to establish two local units for graduation which fit the needs of their community. The re-worked graduation requirements also allow for greater inclusion of career technical education as part of a student's pathway to graduation.

AFT New Mexico President Whitney Holland spoke in favor of HB 126/a throughout HB 126/a's progress in the House of Representatives. HB 126/a was approved by the New Mexico State Senate by a vote of 40-0. It now heads to the Governor's desk for her signature.

MARCH 17

State Senate

House Bill 181, carried by Reps. Joanne Ferrary, Debbie Sariñana, Christine Trujillo, and Sen. Bill Soules, was heard earlier this week by members of the Senate Education Committee, who unanimously advanced the bill out of committee.

The legislation seeks to expand the definition and eligibility of Nationally Board-Certified Teachers to receive a differential for their certification. If enacted, HB 181 would extend differential eligibility to NBCT counselors and administrators with a current certification.

HB 181 was passed by the State Senate this evening by a vote of 35-0. HB 181 now goes to Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham for her signature or veto.

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AFT NM-supported Legislation on Final Third Reading:

(These are bills which are on a final action before being sent to the governor.)

- House Bill 403/a: PSLF Loan Multiplier Act
- House Bill 521: Supplemental Salary Increase for State, Higher Education, and Public School Employees

AFT NM-supported Legislation on the governor's desk:

(These are bills that will become law with the governor's signature).

- House Bill 2 & 3: General Appropriations Act of 2023
- House Bill 126/a: High School Graduation Redesign
- House Bill 127: Educational Assistant Minimum Salary
- House bill 130/aa: K-12 Plus Programs (This has been signed by Lujan Grisham)
- House Bill 181: National Board Certification Units
- House Bill 199/a: Increase School At-Risk Index
- House Bill 216: LESC Public Education Study
- House Bill 533: School Group Insurance Contributions
- House Bill 307: Licensed Teacher Prep Affordability

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Sincerely,

Whitney Holland



President, NM American Federation of Teachers