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Oklahoma Policy Institute

2017 POLICY PRIORITY: INCREASE TEACHER PAY

Background

Oklahoma's average teacher pay and benefits is among the very lowest in the nation and well below surrounding states. This noncompetitive pay damages schools' ability to attract and retain well-qualified teachers. Districts with no other option are hiring a skyrocketing number of emergency certified teachers who don't meet even the basic requirements for their position.

While more competitive pay is not the only reform needed to improve teacher quality in Oklahoma, it is a necessary foundation for other improvements.



The Solution

Oklahoma needs a plan to increase teacher pay that is backed by identified recurring revenue. After years of deep budget cuts across state agencies and more projections of shrinking state revenues in the immediate future, it's clear that we cannot provide the funds for a teacher raise simply by moving around existing revenues.

The state does have a variety of good revenue options to support a teacher raise, including a partial rollback of recent income tax cuts for the highest incomes, reforming the sales tax to cover more purchases, and repealing or capping tax breaks for large businesses that have grown dramatically even in years of significant revenue shortfalls.

What You Should Do

Contact your state Representative and Senator and urge them to approve recurring revenue increases to back up a teacher pay plan. Emphasize that any teacher pay proposal without new recurring revenue behind it is not realistic.

You can look up your Senator and Representative at <http://okpolicy.org/find-your-legislator/>, call the House switchboard at 405-521-2711, and call the Senate switchboard at 405-524-0126.