



TEXAS STATE TEACHERS ASSOCIATION / NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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Texas State Teachers Association's Testimony Opposing Senate Bill 8

The primary objective of SB 8 is to allow school districts to deal with the financial crisis created by the state legislature by reducing teacher salaries. The bill sets up two ways, both of which can be used at the same time by school boards, to cut teacher pay.

First, it allows a district to reduce the number of days a teacher works by up to 6 and to reduce pay correspondingly. This could result in about a 3.2 per cent salary reduction.

- The bill makes no provision that this furlough apply to any other professional staff.
- It makes no provision regarding what, if any, other strategies must be utilized by a school district prior to implementing it.
- It is a permanent reduction in that nothing requires a district to restore those lost days, even if funding levels return to or surpass 09-10 levels.
- It is really just a trick with no treat since teachers will, of course, show up before school starts to get ready and stay after school is out to wrap things up and continue to go to professional development sessions, even though they are no longer being paid to do so. Ultimately, they will get less money, but they won't really work fewer days.

Second, there is the provision that wipes out Sec. 21.402(d) and permanently eliminates the salary floor. This provision allows school districts to cut salaries as much as they want so long as they do not go below the state minimum salary schedule.

- This is also a permanent reduction because nothing in the bill ever requires districts to restore the cut even if funding levels return to or surpass 09-10 levels.
- There is no provision that applies these salary reductions to any other professional staff.
- I have already had one call from a reporter about a school district that has notified employees that they may cut salaries by 1/3 if this law passes.
- The bill makes no requirements that districts implement any other cost saving measures before implementing this provision.

And, after a district has furloughed a teacher for six days, and cut their pay, and eliminated their stipends, there is nothing that keeps the district from then eliminating teaching positions.

This bill enables a district to deal with the current fiscal crisis by putting the entire impact on the classroom and ultimately students. It creates a permanent structure for reducing teacher salaries to deal with what is supposed to be a short term political crisis. It is unwarranted and unjustified and bad public policy. It allows schools to skip over other options because this is now the easiest way to balance their budgets.

Finally, this bill will not do anything to help districts next year. If this bill passes, and hopefully it won't, but if it did, it will be too late to have any impact on this school year.

And let's not forget that this bill also unnecessarily eliminates due process protections for our most senior teachers and those teachers in the unfortunate position of being proposed for non-renewal. Teachers deserve better. Teachers deserve respect.

We urge you to vote for teachers and against SB 8.