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Oklahoma Policy Institute

2018 POLICY PRIORITY: INCREASE TEACHER PAY

Background

Oklahoma's average teacher pay and benefits are among the very lowest in the nation and well below surrounding states. This non-competitive pay damages schools' ability to attract and retain well-qualified teachers.

Hundreds of teachers have already left Oklahoma or left the profession because of our non-competitive pay, and districts are hiring a skyrocketing number of emergency certified teachers because they don't have applicants who meet basic requirements for teaching positions.

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, 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 Can 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.

To join the grassroots coalition of Oklahomans working to connect Oklahoma values with better budget and tax priorities, visit www.togetherok.org. To receive SMS advocacy alerts on important budget issues, text OKBUDGET to 51555.