

**NJEA Legislative Update**  
**Forwarded by: Donna R. O'Malley**  
**March 6, 2023**

*I received this update this weekend from our Burlington County Retired Education Association. Information on page 5 is from NEA and various other State sources. Get a hot cup of coffee or tea and read all this important information.*

What's going on in Trenton?

- \* STATE BUDGET
- \* MENTAL HEALTH
- \* EDUCATOR SHORTAGE
- \* SDA BILL HELD
- \* ELECTION TRANSPARENCY
- \* PERIOD POVERTY
- \* LEGISLATIVE MUSICAL CHAIRS

#### STATE BUDGET

Tuesday, February 28, was budget day. Governor Murphy gave his budget address in-person to a packed house, and it's a good budget for us. It includes:

- \* \$832 million more in K-12 school formula funding, for a total of \$10.8 billion. This doesn't mean that all districts are getting additional aid. 157 districts will see less, 13 will have no change, and 407 will see an increase.
- \* \$109 million more for pre-K education, for a total of \$1.1 billion.
- \* A third consecutive full payment into the state pension funds — \$7.09 billion – and full funding of post-retirement medical benefits.
- \* \$250 million more for SDA construction.
- \* More funding for the Community College Opportunity Grant program, although operating aid for community colleges is flat.
- \* Money to start addressing the educator shortage.

Read Murphy's budget address:

<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562023/approved/20230228b.shtml> and NJEA's statement: <https://www.njea.org/njea-statement-on-budget-address-3/>.

Want to see your district's state aid numbers? <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2023/03/gov-phil-murphy-proposes-830-million-plus-additional-school-aid-but-cuts-to-some-districts/>

Of course, the budget is just a proposal, and it will look very different by the time it gets voted

on at the end of June. Here's how the budget process works:

- \* The governor proposes a budget at the end of February.
- \* The legislature goes on "budget break" and takes public comments and hears from each executive department about its budget needs.
- \* Budget break ends; regular legislative work resumes.
- \* The budget is hashed out in a back room and a deal is announced. The public waits for documents detailing the spending.
- \* Budget committees vote on the budget. Sometimes it's minutes after seeing a document that is almost 300 pages long (legal paper), sometimes they don't even have the full document.

Read John Reitmeyer's article, under the heading "What comes next":

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2023/03/njs-key-budget-document-is-called-the-budget-in-brief/>

For more information on the budget,

- \* Panel discussion on the budget: <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/nj-budget-heres-a-breakdown-of-the-murphy-plan-and-priorities/>
- \* Reactions to the budget: <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2023/03/reactions-to-nj-gov-phil-murphy-2024-budget-address/>
- \* Increased revenue collections give the state more money : <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2023/03/higher-than-expected-revenue-forecast-for-fy2023-could-help-pay-down-new-jerseys-high-bonded-debt/>

## MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES

A recent student suicide has led to even more attention to bullying and student mental health.

- \* How bad is bullying? <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2023/02/rebecca-coniglio-race-color-religion-ancestry-national-origin-gender-sexual-orientation-gender-identity-and-expression-mental-physical-sensory-disability-hostile-educational-environment-state-departme/>
- \* Not all agree that the Murphy administration's plan to replace school based youth services with a hub and spoke program will work. <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2023/03/critics-of-gov-phil-murphys-budget-commitment-to-student-mental-health-services/>
- \* Lawmakers are trying to address the mental health crisis in schools. The Senate Education Committee heard testimony on how schools can help combat the increase in teen suicide. Staff mental health needs was also part of the discussion. <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/video/nj-teens-need-better-mental-health-support-lawmakers-are-told/>

## EDUCATOR SHORTAGE

While the state budget does include some funding to address the shortage of school staff, it's just a start. The NJ Department of Education missed some real opportunities to expand the pool of

teachers. Read NJEA President Sean Spiller and NJ Public Charter Schools President Harry Lee as they ask the DOE to take further action to end the teacher shortage:

<https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2023/03/changes-to-njs-teaching-requirements-would-make-it-far-easier-to-get-committed-men-and-women-into-classroom/>

#### SDA BILL HELD

A4496, which would provide some provisions of the law governing construction of school facilities projects and the New Jersey Schools Development Authority was pulled from consideration for the Assembly voting session on Monday, February 27. NJEA opposes the bill in its current form.

#### ELECTION TRANSPARENCY?

Lawmakers were going to vote on a bill to change campaign finance laws, but the bill was pulled from the agenda at the last minute.

\* Here's what the bill would do: <https://newjerseyglobe.com/legislature/heres-everything-that-the-elections-transparency-act-would-do/>

\* Here's what happened: <https://newjerseymonitor.com/2023/02/27/lawmakers-yank-bill-that-critics-warn-would-gut-election-protections/>.

#### PERIOD POVERTY

Access to menstrual products is difficult for those without financial resources. Assemblywoman Speight is promoting a package of bills to address period poverty, as well as increase awareness of the issue. <https://www.njspotlightnews.org/2023/02/nj-lawmakers-push-bill-to-address-period-poverty/>

#### LEGISLATIVE MUSICAL CHAIRS

**Senator Sam Thompson**, 12th legislative district, changed parties from Republican to Democrat when he had a primary challenger who insinuated he was too old to be in office and no one in his caucus stood up for him. Originally he was planning to run as a democrat, but he finally has **decided to retire**.

**Senator Christopher Connors** ®, 9<sup>th</sup> Legislative District will not seek re-election.

**Senator Jean Stanfield** ®, 8<sup>th</sup> Legislative District has also announced her retirement.

#### BILLS THAT MOVED IN COMMITTEE SINCE THE LAST UPDATE:

\* A1728 - Expands duties of Commission on Human Trafficking to prevent human trafficking

in women and children of color. (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Senate.) (Support)

\* A1729/S3550 -Requires AG to address human trafficking in underserved communities. (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Senate. Referred to Senate Budget and Appropriations Committee.) (Support)

\* A3227 - Prohibits State Board of Education from limiting number of certain two-year college credits that may be applied towards meeting teacher certification requirements. (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Assembly) (Support)

\* A3681 -Establishes New Jersey Educator Scholarship Program; appropriates \$3 million. (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Assembly.) (Support)

\* A4496 - Revises various provisions of law governing construction of school facilities projects and operations of New Jersey Schools Development Authority. (Reported out of Assembly Appropriations Committee) (Seek Amendments)

\* A4525/S1553 -Permits State Board of Education to authorize alternative teaching certificate. (Recommitted to Assembly Appropriations Committee. Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Assembly.) (Support)

\* S3330 - Requires school districts to provide instruction on grief as part of New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education. (Reported out of committee with committee amendments, 2nd reading in Senate.) (Support)

\* S3543 - Directs DOE to develop guidelines for school districts concerning student mental health services. (Reported out of committee, 2nd reading in Senate.) (Support)

#### **BILLS THAT PASSED IN ONE HOUSE SINCE THE LAST UPDATE:**

\* A3681 -Establishes New Jersey Educator Scholarship Program; appropriates \$3 million. (Passed in Assembly 73-5-0.) (Support)

\* A4458 -Requires DOE to establish central registry of individuals and organizations interested in providing supplemental tutoring support to students. (Passed in Assembly 76-0-1.) (Support)

\* A4720 -Requires Commissioner of Education to distribute survey to school districts regarding instruction on Holocaust and genocides. (Passed in Assembly 78-0-0.) (Support)

\* S1662 -Requires NJ Youth Suicide Prevention Advisory Council to prepare report regarding suicide prevention instruction in public schools. (Passed in Senate 38-0.) (Support)

\* S2764 -Establishes "VETeach Pilot Program" in DOE to facilitate teacher certification of veterans. (Passed in Senate 38-0.) (Support)

\* A398/S3080 -Establishes position of Youth Disconnection Prevention and Recovery Ombudsperson; establishes "School Disconnection Prevention Task Force." (Passed in Assembly 77-1-0.) (Support)

#### **BILLS SENT TO THE GOVERNOR SINCE THE LAST UPDATE:**

\* A1791/S3306 -Establishes "Career and Technical Education Scholar Awards" to annually recognize outstanding career and technical education students. (Passed in Senate and sent to Governor 38-0.) (Support)

\* A3199/S2008 -Establishes "Health Care Heroes Violence Prevention Act." (Passed in

Assembly and sent to Governor 78-0-0.) (Support)

**Other Legislative News/New Jersey News:**

The entire NJ Legislature will be up for re-election this year. Look for a very active Primary season in June and a contentious election come November. All educators should do what they can to learn about the folks that are running for election or re-election.

The legislators of the 12<sup>th</sup> District have announced that they will sponsor a bill requiring Schools to Report All Assaults resulting in Injury to their local Police Departments. This Bill is a result of the tragic death of a student from Central Regional High School. Be on the look-out for more information about this Bill.

Have you ever wanted to know how to run for Political Office? The Center for American Women in Politics is sponsoring their next workshop on March 17 & 18 at the Douglass Student Center at Rutgers in New Brunswick. Go to this website for more information you can email: [cawp.info@eagleton.rutgers.edu](mailto:cawp.info@eagleton.rutgers.edu) or go to their website at [cawp.rutgers.edu](http://cawp.rutgers.edu)

NJEA is a sponsor in the new Center for Honesty in Education. **NJEA's Center for Honesty in Education** aims to combat disinformation, regressive policies, and dangerous rhetoric in local school districts by giving our association leaders the tools necessary to forge constructive partnerships with parents and other community stakeholders, discredit bad actors who seek to politicize our public schools and—above all—keep our education community focused on continuing to provide a safe and inclusive learning environment for every single student. Go to this site for more information and sign up for the newsletters. <https://www.njea.org/edhonesty/> one of the “Bad Actors” we were warned against is the 1776 Project and the Sunlight Policy Center.

**On the Federal Front:**

Congressman Andy Kim sponsored a Bill to make Child Care easier for those in the Military. The **Military Child Care Transparency and Expansion Act** would expand the **Child Care in Your Home** in-home fee assistance pilot program to an additional region to be determined by the Department of Defense (DoD). Congressman Kim's bill would build on the success of this program and help more service members and their families by offsetting the cost of in-home childcare, reducing everyday expenses especially for military families in areas with high childcare demand and low availability. Be on the look-out for more information about this Bill.

NEA (National Education Association) also sponsors a program to help its members enter the political arena. For more info go to [NEA.org](http://NEA.org) and click on <https://educationvotes.nea.org/run-for-office/see-educators-run/>

NEA has been lobbying on our behalf for the following issues: The George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, The ESP & School Support Staff Family Leave Act, Background checks for all gun purchases. For more information, go to [NEA.org](http://NEA.org) take action page.