



ATPETM

ATPE Input on SB 97 & SJR 1

Regarding dedicating lottery funding for public education to teacher salaries

July 23, 2017

As the largest educators association in Texas with more than 100,000 members across the state, the **Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE)** appreciates this opportunity to offer the following input on Senate Bill (SB) 97 by Sen. Charles Perry and Senate Joint Resolution (SJR) 1 by Sen. Konni Burton, both pertaining to dedicating a portion of the Texas lottery funding currently paid to Texas public education to Texas teacher salaries.

Without question, Texas educators deserve compensation and benefits that more adequately reflect the work they do in the classroom every day to prepare our future workforce and grow young minds. Adequate educator compensation and benefits are a key element of recruiting the best and brightest to the profession and retaining valuable experienced educators in the profession. Despite these facts, not since 2009 has the legislature prioritized legislation that would increase teacher pay. ATPE recognizes that SB 97 and SJR 1 are meant to address the outcry from educators and the public to do more for Texas teachers. However, as one educator put it, “[teachers] don’t want a pay raise if it is on the backs of [their] students”. Unfortunately, that is exactly what SB 97 and SJR 1 represent.

Educators want and deserve pay raises that won’t place additional burdens on their local school districts or force those districts to cut other vital areas of their budgets. That is why ATPE believes the legislature should pivot its focus on teacher pay to developing plans for long-term investments that do not come out of existing money already dedicated to public schools. Especially as our current school finance system has been deemed barely sufficient by the Texas Supreme Court, it would be irresponsible to take from the limited money that is already being used for Texas public schools in order to pay for compensation and benefit increases for teachers. Such a move would likely result in cuts to programs in local schools that benefit the students teachers are dedicated to serving. The legislature should address the need for more competitive educator compensation in a way that does not place added pressure on school districts and local taxpayers, or create a detriment for Texas students. This must be done by directing districts to increase educator salaries while at the same time providing additional state funding to support the directive.

Thank you for considering the above input on SB 97 and SJR 1. For additional information, contact ATPE Governmental Relations at (800) 777-2873 or government@atpe.org.

The Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE) has been a strong voice for Texas educators since 1980. It is the leading educators’ association in Texas with more than 100,000 members statewide. With its strong collaborative philosophy, ATPE speaks for classroom teachers, administrators, future, retired and para-educators and works to create better opportunities for 5 million public schoolchildren. ATPE is the ally and the voice of Texas public school educators.