

# TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION PUBLIC SCHOOL ADVOCATE

LEGISLATIVE REPORT | April 2, 2018 | VOLUME 4, ISSUE 5

## Legislators reject proposal to expand ineffective, unpopular special ed voucher program

**TEA continues streak of defeating damaging voucher schemes**

A bill that would have massively expanded the special education voucher program was defeated in a house subcommittee. If passed, the program would have expanded fourfold what TEA and special education professionals across the state see as an attempt to undermine the gains of inclusion and would have posed a risk to students.

"Stopping the bill at its first vote shows we're winning the opinion battle in the voucher fights," said TEA chief lobbyist Jim Wrye. "We can't rest when it comes to privatization, but it is heartening to see we are beating it earlier and earlier."

The Memphis-only voucher bill was pulled at the beginning of the session.



The Individual Education Account program allows certain special needs students with IEPs to leave public schools, and the families receive BEP state funding of approximately \$6,700. Parents are notified they waive all federal rights to special education services by taking the monies.

There is no accountability for the program. The department of education testified in subcommittee there is

**IEA vouchers**  
cont. page 6

## TEA, legislators work to get raises into paychecks

A pair of bills seeking to address the disconnect between state money provided for raises and salary increases was discussed extensively in the legislature recently. There is a growing realization on the part of lawmakers that the raises they pass aren't always getting into the paychecks of Tennessee educators.

"It's clear teachers have succeeded in raising awareness on this important issue," said TEA chief lobbyist Jim Wrye. "Lawmakers specifically mentioned repeated calls from back home by teachers reporting they received little to no raises, despite the state doing their part by increasing the money sent to the school system."

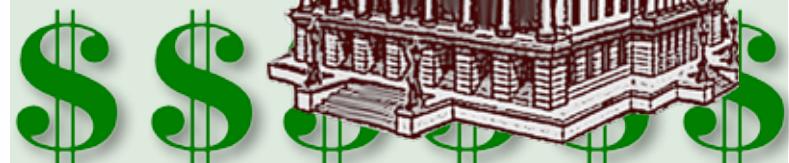
One bill by Rep. Mike Carter (R-Ooltewah) sought to require schools in his district to ensure that teacher salary schedules are adjusted up whenever the state provides a raise. The bill ultimately failed to pass out of subcommittee in the house, but there was extensive discussion on the bill that highlighted a number of issues that have contributed to the lagging teacher pay. Opponents of the bill highlighted the

**Teacher salary**  
cont. page 7

Organizing for change  
poster pg. 4-5



TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



## Governor adds funding for school security, some recurring funds yet to be allocated

TEA continues to urge Gov. Bill Haslam and the state legislature to "Beat Bama" in teacher pay.

With some millions in recurring revenue yet to be allocated, TEA is working to ensure more funds are dedicated to teacher salaries in the final budget version.

The salary increase would be separate from the \$30 million announced by the governor in a budget amendment recently, which would go to improving school safety. That amendment includes \$25 million in one-time,

nonrecurring funds and an additional \$5.2 million dedicated to recurring school safety grants.

"The governor's initial budget proposal includes \$212 million in new spending, with \$55 million dedicated to teacher pay," said TEA President Barbara Gray. "The governor's initial proposal amounts to a 2 percent increase in state funding for teacher salaries, but TEA is pushing for closer to a 4 percent increase for teachers. We know we can 'Beat Bama' in teacher

**Budget**  
cont. page 7

## How to protect students and teachers

School safety has dominated much of the legislative session after the tragedy in Parkland, Fla. Arming teachers, adding School Resource Officers, improving facilities and increasing funding have been discussed. Many bills have been filed and committee debates have been heated.



**SCHOOL SAFETY**

"Every student and teacher deserves a safe learning environment," said TEA President Barbara Gray. "With each new violent incident the tension and concern grows. But we don't want to trade one tragedy with another. Reacting to school shooting events by arming teachers and having more guns in schools raises the possibility of an accident that injures or kills a student or educator."

**School safety**  
cont. page 7



TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

**THE STRONGEST VOICE FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS**

# It's time to prepare for the open primary elections

By TEA President Barbara Gray



One of the challenges of being a public school educator is working in a profession that is so heavily influenced by elected officials. Everyone from the local school board and county commission, to the state legislature and governor, and even those at the federal level, can have a significant impact on your classroom.

This is why it is so critically important that educators vote in all elections. In our state, primary elections hold greater significance than you might realize.

Many of our state legislators are often by default elected in the primary. Districts in our state tend to lean very heavily toward one party or the other, making the primary election where you see the most contested battles.

***It is important that educators turn out in force to ensure those seats are filled with friends of public education.***

educators turn out in force to ensure those seats are filled with new friends of public education and that our supporters already in the General Assembly retain their seats.

The work starts now. Don't wait until Election Day on August 2 to pay attention to who is on the ballot or double-check that your voter registration is up to date. Find your voter card now and confirm your current address is on it. Go next door to your neighbors and call your family members to tell them to do the same. If there are adults in your life who are not registered - Get. Them. Registered.

Tennessee ranks 40th in the nation in voter registration and last in voter turnout. Last! A 2016 study also ranked Tennessee 43rd out of 48 in turnout of black voters.

This is unacceptable. Every Tennessean of voting age needs to be registered and needs to show up to vote - and not just in the "big" elections.

Your county commission or city council sets the budget for your school system. Your local school board sets many of your working conditions and your students' learning conditions. Your state legislators determine evaluations, high-stakes testing and so much more. The governor's proposed budget each year determines available funding for our schools and salaries. This whole column could be a list of the decisions elected officials make that impact our students and our profession.

There is too much at stake for the future of our public schools in Tennessee for any educator to skip a chance to vote. Educate yourself on the candidates who will be on your ballot, and then get to the polls this summer to make your teacher voice heard!

# Portfolio fight demonstrates power of organizing

By TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder



Oxford Dictionary defines "organize" as "to arrange systematically."

Before I became a public education advocate, this word would make me think of straightening up my home or ensuring my calendar was in order. After decades of advocating for great public schools in Oklahoma, Colorado and now Tennessee, I can't hear the word "organize" without thinking of the work of the association.

In politics at all levels, it is believed that money buys you power and influence. Public school advocates, though, are mostly educators and parents - two demographic groups that don't often have very deep pockets. So without money, how do you explain significant association wins at the state and local level on issues like salary, classroom size, high-stakes testing, privatization threats and more?

While we do not have the deep pockets of our opponents, we have the power of organizing on our side. When you start talking about our kids, organized educators and parents are a force to be reckoned with.

One recent example of successful organizing is the ongoing fight to improve the Kindergarten and pre-K portfolio system.

In 2016-17, the state piloted a new way to measure achievement of Kindergarten and pre-K students, two grade levels without TVAAS data. Despite positive feedback from educators who piloted both the portfolio system and new standards, the state made significant changes to the reporting requirements and later clustered the new standards in a way that made them developmentally inappropriate. When the program rolled out statewide this school year, it was almost unrecognizable to those who had participated in the pilot.

Instead of keeping their concerns to themselves, the teachers started organizing. They got their association representatives in the loop and began speaking out about the issues they were encountering, sharing details with administrators and local school boards about the realities of the revamped program.

With the help of TEA, educators took action and are now close to seeing legislation passed that will require the department to address their concerns. Learn more about their organizing effort on pages 4 and 5.

These teachers prove that with effective organizing, we can accomplish great things for our profession and our students.

It is easy to feel like a small fish in a very big pond, especially when your concern is with something mandated by the state. I want to remind you that you have a network of tens of thousands of educators and TEA staff members all across the state who are ready to have your back and stand united for meaningful change.

***"You have a network of tens of thousands of educators ... who are ready to have your back and stand united for meaningful change."***

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UniServ Staff contact information  
can be found on page 6.

## Member Voices

# Collaborative conference MOU is worth defending

By David Huebner, Maury County EA president



In August 2016, Maury County teachers lost their long-standing Memo of Understanding (MOU) that we

had collaboratively conferred with our school board.

After two collaborative conferencing sessions earlier in the summer between educators and management teams, both sides agreed that the new Memorandum of Understanding would be presented at the July school board meeting for discussion and anticipated approval. Instead, our many hours of work on this new MOU proved for naught, as the new agreement, which also included a 5 percent pay raise for educators, was never brought for consideration at the meeting.

In the past nearly two years, Maury County educators have seen many previous teacher protections and rights disappear. Teachers are often asked to stay after school for an abundance of meetings: Faculty, RTI, collaboration, learning communities, and so on. These meetings also increasingly occur during teachers' planning periods, which are already consumed by quick trips to the restroom, running off copies, meetings with administrators, special education conferences, parents, students, and collaboration with other educators.

Our MOU also ensured the salaries of new administrative hires were appropriately in line with the district budget and teacher salaries. We fear without this protection, candidates from outside the county could take advantage of the new freedom to individually negotiate surprisingly large salaries, including travel, credit card, and other benefit options.

Disparities in salaries between teachers and central office administrators have increased dramatically. In years past, both educator and management teams have agreed to keep these salary

protections in place for central office staff.

Our MOU also provided the following negotiated provisions: grievance procedures, schedule protection, salary, stipends, benefits, leave, safety and security on the job, planning periods, duty-free lunches, class size, and school calendar. Everything could be negotiated, except standardized testing, tenure, and evaluations. Now, without a board-approved MOU in place, all procedures and policies are located in school board policies and are not subject to negotiation.

As a result, the teacher morale in our county is suffering. The gap – not only in salary, but also in relationships and trust – has widened significantly between educators and central office. With their voices silenced, teachers have growing concern for the district's ability to remain in tune with what schools, students, and our community really need to advance and enhance student learning. Teachers are the front line between the school system and students and their families. No one better understands the educational needs of students than their own teachers.

So, my advice to you: protect your MOU! It is worth the time and effort it takes to petition the board, organize a vote and conference an MOU that will protect your professional rights and the learning conditions of your students.

While we are working through the courts to restore our MOU, I understand better than I ever have exactly what is at stake with negotiated agreements: guarded instruction time, protected schedules, improved salaries and benefits, a respectful work environment, protections from inappropriate behavior, academic freedom, and safety.

Remember, teacher associations are unions-forged in unity and fighting for teachers! Protect your MOU!

**Drop a Pin DESTINATION LEADERSHIP**

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Register online: [teateachers.org/SLA](http://teateachers.org/SLA)

# ASK TEA

## ANSWERS FROM THE EXPERTS AT THE TEA HOTLINE

**Q:** With so many professional files (including teacher evaluations and licenses) maintained online, is it necessary to keep records of my own?

**A:** It is recommended that teachers maintain a personal file of the following records:

- Copies of student grade verification lists for each grading period
- Copies of student-claiming reports (for teachers in tested subjects) after each claiming session
- A copy of the teacher's personnel file copied from the file maintained by the school district. (Note: the teacher should routinely review this personnel file to ensure she/he has copies of everything it contains.)
- A copy of the teacher's teaching license
- Copies of evaluation reports and TVAAS reports, annually

Though it may be cumbersome to maintain these copies for your records, it can be to your benefit to have dated copies of these reports if a discrepancy should occur. If you have any questions about how to access the above-listed information, don't hesitate to contact your TEA UniServ Coordinator for assistance.

**Q:** Earlier this year, I asked my assistant principal for advice, which he was happy to give. However, when I followed that advice, I got into trouble with my principal, and the assistant principal wouldn't admit that he had given me the advice that I followed. What should I do in the future to keep this from happening again?

**A:** Whenever you receive verbal advice or direction from a supervisor, we recommend that you ask for the directives or recommendations in writing. If the supervisor does not follow up with the documentation, you should create reverse documentation to protect yourself. This can be done by sending an email or written memo to the supervisor stating your understanding of the directive/recommendation, and politely asking the supervisor to clarify if you have misunderstood. Since you have memorialized the conversation in writing, it is then incumbent on the supervisor to respond, if she/he does not agree.

Keep copies of this documentation on a personal electronic device, email account or in hard copy form at home, so that you have the documentation as needed.

**Q:** My principal announced our assignments for the upcoming TCAP assessment window, and advised that I would be working with students requiring testing accommodations. My experienced colleagues took their assignments in stride, but as a first year teacher, I am terrified that an inadvertent breach of test security or protocol could cost me my job or my license! What can I do to avoid becoming a testing cautionary tale?

**A:** Given the recent scrutiny surrounding high-stakes testing, your concerns are completely understandable! Harness that apprehension and use it to your advantage by proactively seeking the training and resources necessary to complete your testing assignment without incident. That starts with attending a test administrator training session, which should be offered by your system or building test coordinator. The training should include review of the state test security law as well as state and local test security guidelines and procedures. Next familiarize yourself with the all-important Test Administration Manual (TAM), which is available on the department's EdTools portal. Last, and perhaps most importantly, confirm any details about your assignment—particularly verbal instructions about specific students, schedules, or accommodations—by sending an email to your test coordinator and immediate supervisor asking for clarification or corrections as needed. Remember in the realm of testing, assumptions can lead to costly mistakes. If you aren't getting the information you need, be vocal and seek the assistance of your local association representative or UniServ coordinator for support.



The TEA Advocacy Hotline supports local leaders and building representatives in answering member questions. If you have an employment-related question, please contact your building rep or UniServ coordinator.

# ORGANIZING: The power of *Kindergarten, Pre-K teachers show a unified voice*

## ATTACKING PROBLEMS IN STANDARDS, SCHOOLDAY

Teachers in non-tested grades or subjects must use schoolwide scores. They want appropriate data to use in evaluations and to improve practice.

The State Department of Education Kindergarten/pre-K portfolio program in 2017 to measure student growth. This well received by participating teachers, they believed it was developmental and accurately measured student perfor

Bill sponsors Sen. Becky Massey and Rep. Eddie Smith (both R-Knoxville)

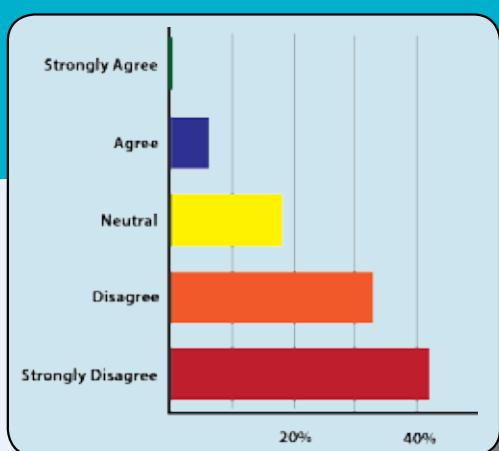


TEA worked with legislators to draft a bill to address the concerns identified by teachers and confirmed through TEA's survey results. TEA members met weekly with legislators during TEA Civication to build bill support.



4

TEA launched an extensive statewide survey of teachers to see how widespread problems were. Respondents overwhelmingly agreed the revised portfolio and clustered standards did not measure student growth.



Results for survey question: "I believe the new portfolio system will properly measure student growth."

5

The House unanimously approved HB1686/SB1686 now awaits a final vote in the Senate, where it is to pass. The bill requires teachers be held-harmless for portfolio scores in the 2017-18 school year, and mandates the state gather feedback from Kindergarten and pre-K teachers to improve the portfolio system.



# iven model for change *can impact policy and law affecting our classrooms*

## SCORING RUBRIC AND ONLINE SYSTEM

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Prior to launching the program statewide in 2017-18, the department changed reporting requirements, clustered new standards in a developmentally inappropriate ways, and shifted to a new online vendor.



TEA member Natasha Patchen shares her concerns with the Knox County Board of Education, leading the board to pass a resolution calling on the state to make 2017-18 a hold-harmless year.

3

When the revised portfolio system and newly clustered standards were implemented statewide, teachers who had experienced

the piloted program immediately recognized the significant changes and began speaking out.

2

PROBLEMS IN  
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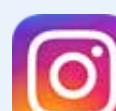
Moving forward: Teachers must now engage with the state to ensure teacher feedback drives the process of revising the portfolio system and standards.



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# TEA recommendations protect students with special needs, prevents IEA voucher expansion

## IEA vouchers from page 1

no way of knowing what, if any, academic or behavioral progress these children make using state taxpayer dollars. The program was designed to be, and will remain, a black hole for tracking children.

Approximately 14,000 students qualify for the IEA voucher with diagnoses such as autism, intellectual disabilities, and deaf-blindness. Every family is informed of eligibility by the state annually, and the program is in its second year.

Only 80 families are currently using the program.

"It is clear the vision for this program by the privatization advocates was wrong, and that parents recognize the value of special education in our public schools," Wrye said. "Proponents painted a bleak picture of trapped families, while we were concerned

about our students. Sending a check with no academic accountability should give everyone pause. The good news is that almost all families understand the value and keep their students in public schools."

When the General Assembly passed this law, TEA convened a working group of concerned special education teachers and researchers to help develop rules for the program to highlight student safety, allowing parents to make informed decisions. Low participation levels are a testament to that work, and the quality of education for special needs students.

"This program is the second front in the voucher fight," said Wrye.

"You can guarantee bills to expand this program will come in future years, including one I imagine for every student in the state. We will need to make sure we elect legislators who will stand up for public schools."

## It's unanimous: No new tests until 2021

A statewide moratorium on new tests until the 2021-22 school year passed the final hurdle in the Tennessee Senate last week and is headed to the governor's desk for signature.

"The bill passed both chambers unanimously in a clear indication this was a much-needed measure," said Jim Wrye, TEA chief lobbyist.

Supported by TEA and sponsored by Sen. Bill Ketron and Rep. Tim Rudd, both of Murfreesboro, SB1806/HB1855 prohibits the Tennessee Department of Education and the State Board of Education from mandating any new state tests for any grades beyond those required as of the past school year.

The legislation does not cover federal assessments, tests under response to intervention, or tests approved by local school districts.

"Tests are a good diagnostic tool, but we know our students are tested too much, and this bill is a good first step toward putting the testing situation in order," said TEA

President Barbara Gray. "When the state ties so many high-stakes decisions to test outcomes, they become a tool of punishment, and it's time to change that."

TEA has been sounding the alarm on over-testing and highlighting the major problems with testing in Tennessee over the last few years.

The Keton-Rudd bill is one of many efforts supported by TEA to address problems with testing in Tennessee.

"We continue to question the validity of TVAAS data used in evaluations, the stark contrast between high achievement in ACT and graduation rates, and the very low proficiency scores the

state reported for all Tennessee students," Gray said. "The state must also address concerns with the lack of transparency in the new testing system and significantly reduce the number of high-stakes assessments. Ultimately, the test-and-punish regime must end entirely."



Bill sponsors  
Sen. Bill Ketron  
(top) and Rep.  
Tim Rudd (both  
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# Share feedback with department, win classroom grants and school prizes

Tennessee teachers are encouraged to take the 2018 Tennessee Educator Survey, conducted jointly between the Tennessee Department of Education and the Tennessee Education Research Alliance at Vanderbilt University's Peabody School of Education.

Participants will be eligible for a variety of individual and school-level rewards for completing the survey, including several drawings for a \$300 classroom supply grant.

Open to all teachers, administrators and certified staff in Tennessee, TES is intended to inform state research and decision-making in public education. Survey questions range from what is working to what

needs to change in areas like school climate, teacher evaluation, as well as state education initiatives.

"This survey is one of many ways we can affect real change in teaching and learning in Tennessee schools," said TEA Assistant Executive Director Terrance Gibson. "TES results have helped make adjustments in the time allotted for teacher collaboration and fostered conversations between principals and teachers about issues highlighted in their buildings."

If you have questions or would like to receive a survey link, please email [tned.research.alliance@vanderbilt.edu](mailto:tned.research.alliance@vanderbilt.edu) or visit [www.tn.gov/education/data/educator-survey.html](http://www.tn.gov/education/data/educator-survey.html).

SURVEY INCENTIVES			
INDIVIDUAL		SCHOOL-WIDE	
TASK	REWARD	TASK	REWARD
Survey Completion	15 <b>\$300</b> classroom project grants via lottery (drawn weekly)	At least 2/3 school completion by April 4	<b>3</b> <b>\$500</b> grants via lottery
		At least 90% school completion by the end of the survey window	<b>7</b> <b>\$2000</b> grants via lottery

## Bill to silence educators on county commissions defeated

Legislators seeking to prohibit public school employees from serving on county commissions were once again defeated this year. The bill would have prohibited any county employee, including educators, from running and serving on a local commission.

Tennessee law prohibits educators from serving on a local board of education in which they work, and local school boards are separate and independent of county commissions, which are funding bodies. As TEA explained to bill proponents this proved educators were not employees of county commissions, but there was no amendment to exempt teachers from the ban.

"Teachers are community leaders, especially in rural counties, and are an important voice for guiding local government. Banning them from

serving on county commissions was a wrong idea, and would have denied a basic right of self-government," said TEA lobbyist Jim Wrye. "Preventing educators from running for local government offices across the state would have silenced our significant voice. We'll fight to ensure the rights of educators are unabridged."

Currently, there are dozens of teachers—many of them TEA members—who serve as county commissioners and on local municipal councils. All of these teachers would have been cycled off, and an important viewpoint for local government would have been silenced.

"As the association is more and more successful at the state and local levels, we anticipate seeing more of these attempts to silence educators in the future," Wrye said.

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[www.teateachers.org](http://www.teateachers.org)  
[www.nea.org](http://www.nea.org)

## Budget from page 1

pay!"

TEA launched the "Beat Bama" initiative in an effort to bring the average teacher pay in Tennessee above that of our neighbor to the south. TEA members from across the state have been coming to Civication on their spring break to talk to their elected officials at the Capitol about the importance of making good on the governor's promise he made four years ago to lead the nation in teacher salary increases.

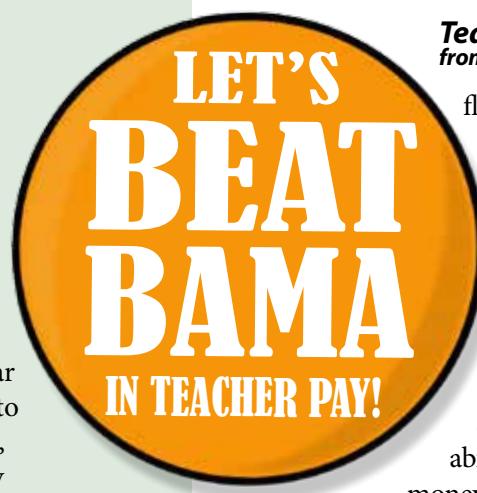
"Since Gov. Haslam made that promise in 2014, he's been steadily increasing teacher pay in his annual budgets, but it hasn't always been smooth sailing," Gray said. "We hope he can finish his tenure as governor on a strong note and put us above Alabama in teacher pay."

At the time of Haslam's announcement four years ago, the average teacher in Tennessee saw little or no increase in salary in two years, while many educators faced increasing insurance expenses and had

to dig deeper into their own pockets for classroom supplies.

TEA has also been pushing to automatically raise the state minimum salary schedule every year to drive money into teacher paychecks, which is especially important for rural teachers who are most affected by pay stagnation.

"Our leaders understand that Tennessee must stay competitive with neighboring states in teacher pay in order to attract and retain the best teachers," Gray said. "The increases by Gov. Haslam in recent years really show that he is listening to teachers and understands the economic hardships they have been facing. We urge him to commit to a 4 percent increase in teacher pay in his final budget, which would be a signature accomplishment as he leaves office."



## Teacher salary from page 1

flexibility that local school systems have under current law to use money allocated for teacher pay in a variety of ways. School systems have the ability to use that money to hire new

positions, fund alternative pay plans, including pay for test scores, and to fund benefits in certain circumstances.

"Using money sent to schools for teacher pay for health insurance benefits is problematic for a couple reasons," Wrye said. "First, if you don't take the district health insurance, you get nothing. Also, your employer paying more toward your health insurance premium doesn't improve a teacher's retirement at all. Her TCRS benefit depends entirely on the highest five years of salary, which stagnates when that money is spent on other things."

Another bill, by Rep. John DeBerry (D-Memphis) and Sen. Brian Kelsey (R-Germantown), has advanced out of committees in each chamber and is

requesting the Office of Educational Research and Accountability (OREA), part of the comptroller's office, to study issues relating to teacher pay over the last three years. TEA supports the study, as it will likely highlight the unintended consequences of stressing spending flexibility to school systems.

A familiar refrain in the general assembly is that the BEP school funding formula is a funding plan, not a spending plan, and that justification is often brought up to defend school systems' ability to use money for things other than teacher pay. However, there are still rules for what can be done with the money sent to systems through the BEP. For example, money allocated for instructional staff can't be used for non-licensed staff. The Department of Education has also made clear during questioning from lawmakers this year that the intent of the money is for it to be used for teacher salaries.

"It's clear that average teacher pay hasn't kept up with state investment, and that this wasn't the case in the past," Wrye said. "We look forward to the excellent researchers at OREA looking at this issue more closely, and hope there will be recommendations moving forward so legislators know their funding increases reach their intended target."

## TEA fights to protect due process rights

TEA has worked to affirm due process for educators who receive licensure action from the state board.

Filed by Rep. Roger Kane (R-Knoxville) and Sen. Dolores Gresham (R-Somerville), HB75/SB578 now requires "that the policies provide licensed personnel with timely due process and are otherwise in compliance with the due process requirements of the Uniform Administrative Procedures Act."

The amendment was a response by TEA to make common-sense changes to several bills affecting teacher licensure this year.

"These are teachers' careers we are talking about, their livelihood and profession, and there need to be safeguards and due process in whatever we pass," Rep. Harry Brooks said.

TEA President Barbara Gray said efforts to protect the rights of teachers are necessary because of several recent cases where TEA had to intervene on behalf of members when it saw their rights and livelihoods being threatened.

"It's an ongoing fight for teaching as a profession," Gray said. "We must defend our professional licenses when we see a threat, and we are grateful to the legislators who are on our side in this fight."

In a recent case, a teacher's career was saved after TEA lawyers intervened after a licensure action was taken by the State Board. Because the educator was a TEA member and had legal protection, the year-long suspension was dropped.

"We've seen an increase in license suspensions by the SBE, often for what appears to be inadvertent or minor mistakes, and worked to establish licensure rules," Gray said. "Of course, the due process requirement would apply to all teachers in the state, but TEA membership provides peace of mind with the backing of the most experienced legal team in state education law, as recent cases have indicated."

## School safety from page 1

In response to legislative action, the Haslam Administration formed a school security task force that included educators, law enforcement, and state officials to come up with proposals to improve safety. It published its report on March 28. The Governor also proposed \$25 million in one-time funding and raised recurring funds to \$10 million annually to meet security needs.

The report recognized more than half of Tennessee's schools do not have an SRO, and some rural counties have no law enforcement coverage for any school.

"All children in Tennessee deserve to learn in a safe and secure environment," said Haslam. "The recommendations of the working group, coupled with increased investment, provide a path to making immediate, meaningful and unprecedented security improvements in our schools."

The task force published three recommendations: a risk assessment of all school facilities to identify vulnerabilities; an increase in resources to secure school resource officers (SROs); and a statewide technology application for anonymous reporting of security threats.

TEA has maintained SROs, other law enforcement, or well-trained professional security personnel are the best solutions for school safety. TEA opposes other ideas such as arming teachers as a means to defend against school shootings.

Current state law allows distressed rural counties that have no SROs to train select volunteer teachers to act as armed security. HB2208 would expand that ability to every school system in the state. TEA opposes the bill, noting that it may reduce SROs where they exist, change the relationship between students and faculty, and raise the possibility of accidents.

TEA lobbyist Jim Wrye testified at length in the House Civil Justice Committee, noting universal agreement among all legislators that SROs are the best solution to school safety.

"Recognizing how many schools have no officers, the governor's major commitment to funding provides a way to expand SRO coverage. Local government and the state now have the means to work together to expand coverage," said Wrye. "There are so many unintended consequences possible in this legislation to arm teachers, and we don't want those to become another kind of terrible tragedy."

A TEA-backed bill, HB 2129/SB 2059, that would allow off-duty officers to act not as SROs, but school security and use state funds for compensation has been moving forward.

"Law enforcement officers often work extra security for schools, such as at football games or other large gatherings. There is no impediment for them to do so during an average school day," said Wrye. "While they wouldn't be SROs, it provides an immediate way to expand coverage rapidly where there currently is none."

Both bills are now before the House Administration and Planning Committee and may be heard next week. TEA is working with law enforcement associations and the administration to craft final legislation to meet the task force priorities, and to expand other important efforts on mental health and reporting to identify students and adults that may pose a threat.

"Columbine to Sandy Hook, and recent tragedies in Kentucky and Florida we are compelled to do everything we can," said Gray. "We need professionals at every school, not volunteers."



# 2018 Open Primary Elections

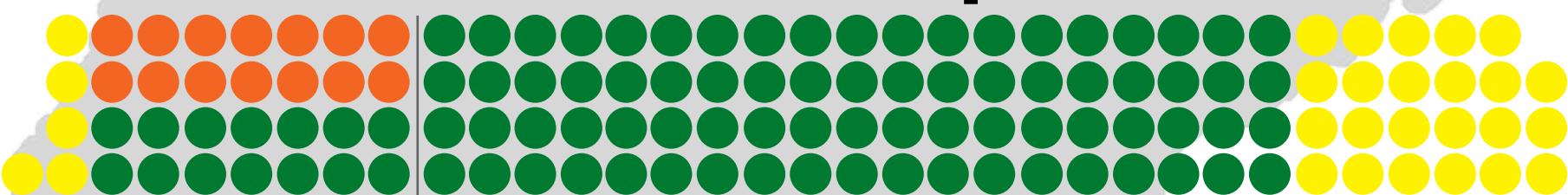
## Tennessee Gubernatorial Race

	Teacher Pay	Testing	Vouchers	Charter Schools	Funding
Diane Black					
Randy Boyd					
Karl Dean					
Craig Fitzhugh					
Beth Harwell					
Bill Lee					

## Tennessee General Assembly

### Senate

### House of Representatives



● Up for re-election

● Not on 2018 ballot

● Open seat

**OPEN PRIMARY: August 2**

**EARLY VOTING BEGINS: JULY 13**

**DEADLINE TO REGISTER: JULY 3**

**EVERY REGISTERED VOTER CAN  
PARTICIPATE IN THE STATE OPEN PRIMARY!**



**Nearly one-quarter of the House will  
be new representatives next year.  
We MUST fill these open seats with  
friends of public education.**

The winners of many primary elections will be the next  
legislators to serve in the Tennessee General Assembly. You  
can't wait until November to elect your next state legislator!