

TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION PUBLIC SCHOOL ADVOCATE

TEA LEGISLATIVE REPORT | MARCH 31, 2016 | VOL. 2, ISSUE 5



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5 MIN.



TEA STOPS PAYROLL BILL

Critical committee vote shoots down attack on TEA, will reconsider April 5

When you win the big fights in the legislature, your enemies start looking for your Achilles' heel.

The deep-pocketed privatizers TEA defeats year after year on the private school voucher fight believe they have found ours with TEA members' ability to pay association dues via payroll dues deduction. These groups believe that if they can eliminate payroll deductions they can eliminate TEA and silence your voice in the General Assembly.

The bill to end payroll deduction was defeated handily in the House Education Administration and Planning Committee on March 22. Despite the 4-6-2 vote, proponents have revived the bill and placed it on a special calendar for April 5, to be reconsidered.

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Chairman Mark White expresses disappointment that a bill like the payroll deduction ban had been brought. He and Rep. Eddie Smith (right) did not vote for the bill, while Rep. Kevin Brooks (left) voted for the bill. The bill failed in the committee.

Hold harmless passes House and Senate unanimously

Hold harmless is a legal term meaning to shield liability from loss or damages. Who knew Tennessee would ever be talking about hold harmless when it came to standardized tests?

Last year, TEA pushed for a bill to keep teachers, students and schools from being harmed by the untested TNReady assessment. TEA called for a two year moratorium on the use of test scores for any high-stakes decisions in Tennessee schools, citing growing questions about the greatest changes in assessment in state history. The administration fought the hold harmless idea until TEA gained traction in the House

and Senate, and a compromise was adopted at the end of the 2015 session reducing the impact of the new test in evaluations.

When the launch of TNReady failed on February 8, Gov. Bill Haslam and Education Commissioner Candice McQueen announced support for legislation to hold teachers completely harmless from any negative impacts of TNReady scores.

This month, legislation addressing the hold harmless provisions received unanimous support in both the House and the Senate. The

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Proposed Constitutional amendment has long way to go

Rep. Bill Dunn's bill would limit state Supreme Court's ability to rule on General Assembly's performance in funding schools

Imagine Tennessee's public schools without the billions of dollars invested in them as a result of the Small Schools lawsuits. Imagine gross disparities among the wealthiest and poorest districts that persist year after year. Imagine no way to address these inequities, and no way to push for adequate funding for schools.

That's the potential threat of Rep. Bill Dunn's proposed constitutional amendment. Our public schools would be forced to simply make do with whatever funding the General Assembly allocates without any recourse to correct inadequacies. Rep. Dunn of Knoxville even told a House committee that he wasn't convinced that the \$1 billion invested in Tennessee schools from 1992-1998 after the BEP was first implemented actually improved education in our state.

Dunn continues to push his amendment to the Tennessee Constitution that would allow the General Assembly to determine what adequate and equitable school funding means.

Our state constitution requires adequate and equitable funding of schools. That requirement is critical to ensuring the legislature does its job and invests in schools. Three times since 1992, school systems have sought relief from the courts in the way of a more equitable school funding formula. Each time, the Supreme Court has found that more funding was needed and its distribution should be more equitable. Each time, the General Assembly was forced to improve funding mechanisms. And each time, Tennessee schools saw more investment and more opportunities for students from all districts.

Dunn's amendment seeks to prevent future lawsuits over school funding while limiting the ability of the state Supreme Court to rule that the General Assembly is not doing its constitutional job to support public schools. Dunn's amendment passed the Administration and Planning

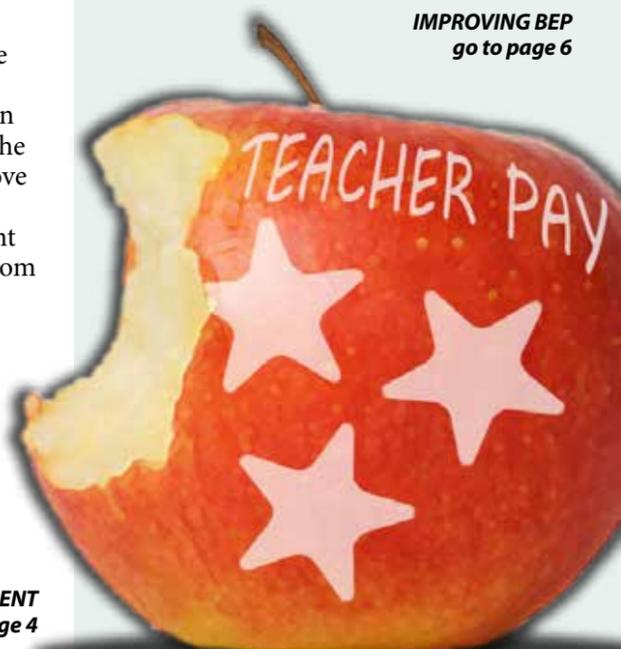
CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT
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BEP reforms to push state funds into paychecks

For years TEA has showed the administration how teacher pay has stagnated and proposed solutions. Governor Bill Haslam has now proposed changes to the BEP law that could result in significant increases in teacher pay in most districts across the state.

Following a year of meetings, Haslam's BEP Task Force provided him with recommendations for improving the state's funding formula for schools, last updated in

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THE STRONGEST VOICE FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS

It's time to eliminate the threat of payroll dues deduction

By TEA President Barbara Gray



You've seen the ads in our publications about switching your dues payment to electronic funds transfer, instead of the payroll deduction method most of us have used for years – but let me explain why this switch is so important.

Five years ago, out-of-state groups bent on

privatizing Tennessee public schools declared war on public education in our state. They won the first battle by putting an end to our collective bargaining rights, but they fell far short of their intended goal to weaken TEA and silence Tennessee educators.

TEA is stronger than ever, and we now have thousands of educators involved in the political process. We have been in an ongoing war since that collective bargaining vote in 2011 - and we have been racking up the big wins. These out-of-state groups have launched every weapon in their arsenal at us – for-profit charter schools, high-stakes decisions tied to test scores, tenure changes, state takeover models, payroll dues deduction and the would-be ultimate win – private school vouchers.

As the largest and strongest advocate for public education in our state, TEA has defeated vouchers for four straight years, kept test scores out of licensure decisions, and

pushed the administration to propose its own testing transparency and hold harmless bills.

As we continue to turn the tide in our favor, we are making some powerful enemies who want nothing more than to dismantle TEA and silence your voice. Their weapon of choice? Ending payroll dues deduction.

Anti-public education legislators love to dangle this threat over our heads every session. It is a legislative battle that wastes our time and takes the focus away from where it needs to be - on issues that actually impact our students and our schools.

The only way to eliminate this ongoing threat is for TEA members to convert their membership to electronic funds transfer

If every TEA member makes the switch to EFT, we can get back to the business that matters - protecting our schools and ensuring every student in Tennessee receives a quality education.

(EFT). If you haven't made the switch, now is the time.

You can quickly and easily convert to EFT on the TEA website. You will have the choice of paying your dues via credit card or a bank draft deduction. Choose what works for you. The important thing is that you make the switch to EFT.

My three granddaughters (we could only get two to sit still long enough for a picture) were here for Civication last week when a House committee voted down this year's version of the payroll deduction attack. While I was relieved to see the bill defeated, looking at my granddaughters renewed my commitment to put an end to this needless annual battle.

We have the means to further weaken our enemy by eliminating one of the weapons in their arsenal. If every TEA member makes the switch to EFT, we can get back to the business that matters - protecting our schools and ensuring every student in Tennessee receives a quality education.



Good for the goose - but not the gander?

By TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder



When my grandmother saw someone demonstrate they thought rules applied to other folks but not them – she would repeat the famous saying: “What is good for the goose is good for the gander!” In other words, “Don't insist others follow rules when you refuse to hold yourself accountable!”

The Tennessee State House has a legislator, Representative Bill Dunn of Knoxville, who is quick to promote accountability for schools, students and teachers, but when it comes to the state legislature, he wants to end the accountability set forth in the state constitution.

I'm talking about those beautiful words that say:

“The state of Tennessee recognizes the inherent value of education and encourages its support. The General Assembly shall provide for the maintenance, support and eligibility standards of

a system of free public schools.” Tennessee State Constitution, Article XI, Section 12

Throughout our state's history, the only time significant new investment reached our schools was when the Supreme Court found the state in violation of providing “a system of free public schools” – either because funding was not adequate or equitable across the state.

Representative Dunn continues to push his amendment to the Tennessee Constitution that would allow the General Assembly to determine what adequate and equitable school funding means. So, the General Assembly is charged with making sure funding is adequate and equitable, but just in case he doesn't want to actually follow

It is time for TEA members and everyone who cares about maintaining “the inherent value of education” in Tennessee to speak up.

this rule, Dunn wants the ability to make up what these words mean without having to worry about being held accountable by another form of government. Forget about the American tradition of checks and balances!

Representative Dunn is the same person who supports accountability measures that can close public schools and end teacher's careers – even if the system being used doesn't make sense. But when it comes to the General Assembly – he doesn't want any accountability at all.

I don't know about you, but it was not wise to get on the wrong side of my grandmother. She was really good about spoiling her grandchildren when we behaved appropriately – but just let someone get out of line and she was willing and able to hold the errant child accountable.

TEA members need to be willing and able to organize everyone who cares about maintaining “the inherent value of education” in Tennessee. Please let your legislators know that you need them to vote NO on this crazy idea.

You may even find the opportunity to include a gentle reminder in your conversations with elected officials that the voting box is another way to hold those accountable who back away from their constitutional obligations.

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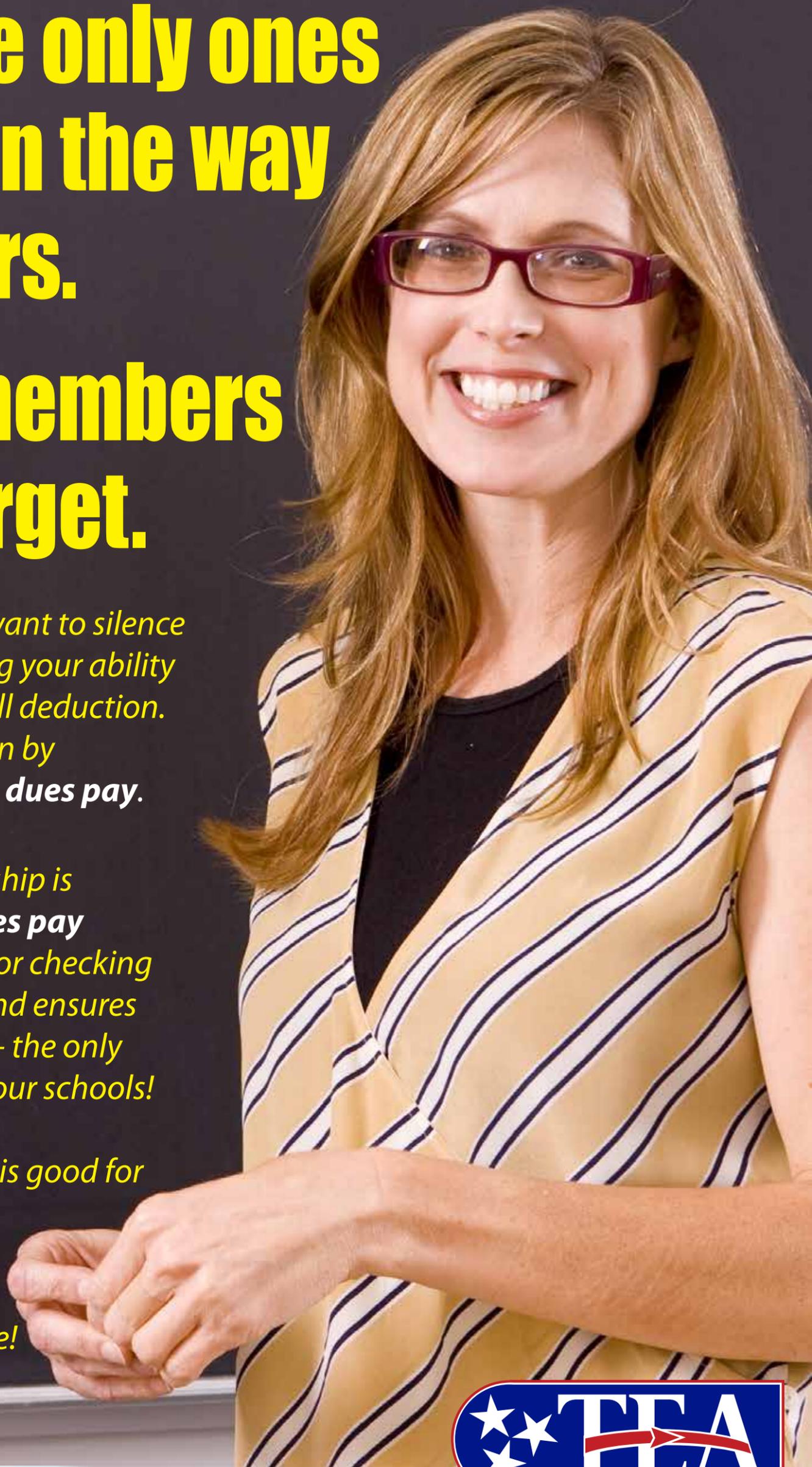
We are the only ones standing in the way of vouchers.

Now TEA members are the target.

*Out-of-state privatizers want to silence your opposition by ending your ability to pay TEA dues by payroll deduction. Remove their ammunition by converting to **automatic dues pay**.*

*Protecting your membership is easy with **automatic dues pay** through your credit card or checking account. It is fast, easy, and ensures your membership in TEA - the only organization protecting our schools!*

Automatic dues pay also is good for your record-keeping. Remember, your state dues are tax-deductible as a professional expense!



**PROTECT YOUR MEMBERSHIP.
IT ONLY TAKES 5 MINUTES ONLINE!**

Sign up with a credit card, debit card or checking account.

WWW.TEATEACHERS.ORG/EZPAY



How does a constitutional amendment become law?

1. A constitutional amendment is proposed in either chamber of the Tennessee General Assembly.

3. The proposed amendment must be published six months prior to the state legislative race held between the first session and the second session of the legislature that consider the constitutional amendment.

5. If passed by two legislative sessions, the measure will then be placed on the statewide ballot at the next general election in which a governor is to be selected.

4. When the second legislative session considers the constitutional amendment, it must pass both chambers by a two-thirds vote.

2. The constitutional amendment must pass both the Tennessee House and Senate by a majority vote. If passed, the amendment is then referred to the next legislative session.

6. The proposed constitutional amendment becomes law if the measure gains more “yes” votes than “no” votes, AND if the “yes” votes equal a majority of all Tennesseans voting in the governor’s race.

CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT from page 1

committee on a 7-5 vote, and next will be heard in the House Budget subcommittee.

Historically, the only time significant new investment reached our schools was when the Supreme Court found the state in violation of Article XI, Section 12 of the Tennessee Constitution which requires the General Assembly to provide for the support and maintenance of a “system of free public schools.”

If Dunn’s proposal became law, it could likely insulate the state from future lawsuits similar to the ones currently pending by Shelby, Hamilton and other counties about the adequacy of state funding. This amendment would prevent districts from seeking relief in the courts for inequitable or inadequate funding.

“TEA opposes any effort that puts school funding in jeopardy, and we believe in the long run an amendment like this could jeopardize state resources,” said TEA President Barbara Gray. “We believe all Tennessee schools should receive fair and adequate funding. This constitutional amendment would eliminate an important part of how we’ve come to fund schools, namely when the state courts have told the General Assembly they haven’t done their job. We believe protecting the Tennessee Constitution means we are protecting our students and our public schools.”

During last week’s deliberations, Rep. Kevin Dunlap (D-Rock Island) said Tennessee Supreme

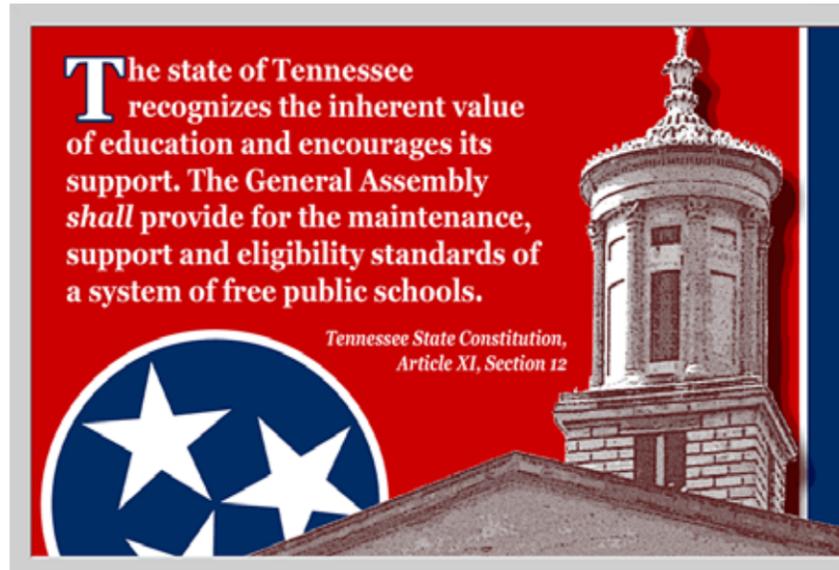
Court rulings in the original Small Schools lawsuit in the early 1990s and two subsequent rulings were critical in requiring state lawmakers to fix funding inequities that had hurt students in rural Tennessee.

“Here are the facts as I see them,” said Dunlap, a career teacher and TEA member. “Education in the state of Tennessee in 2015 is much, much better than where it was before the Small Schools lawsuit.”

Despite approval by two committees so far, the proposal has a long way to go to become law. First, he must succeed in getting the bill through the House committee process. This step alone will require convincing rural legislators to abandon the best interest of their local schools and potentially put the funds for those schools at serious risk. If he succeeds, the bill must also make its way through the Senate committee process.

Even if the legislation passed both chambers this session, it must come back again and receive two-thirds support from both bodies in 2017 before it can be placed on the ballot for Tennesseans to vote on the amendment in 2018.

If the initiative succeeds, the earliest time the proposed change could have any impact on Tennessee schools would be the 2019 session.



“We believe the public will stand with our state’s schools and against this radical departure from our state’s Constitution,” Gray said. “The Tennessee Constitution is clear: the General Assembly must support and adequately fund our schools. We are urging legislators to reject this change that could have devastating long-term consequences, especially for our poorest school districts.”

While the threat of a funding hit is at least three years away, we should all be aware of what’s happening and we should all take a stand to preserve adequate and equitable funding for Tennessee schools.

TEA DEFEATS PAYROLL BILL

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The bill in its current form, sponsored by Rep. Billy Spivey of Lewisburg and Sen. Delores Gresham of Somerville, would eliminate payroll deductions for professional employee organizations, singling out TEA members.

“There is no doubt TEA is the target, and the special interests pushing the bill have shown themselves as anti-teacher,” said TEA chief lobbyist Jim Wrye. “We are working hard to ensure this punitive and petty bill does not make it out of committee.”

This is the second bill to come after payroll deductions for TEA this session. Supporters of the first bill, which included Sen. Todd Gardenhire and Gresham, rushed it through the Senate in a secretive manner, only to see it die in the House Education Instruction and Programs Committee after a strong fight by TEA.

This attack indicates the growing recognition that TEA can take on the out-of-state special interests and win.

If you see your representative to the right, please thank him or her for standing with us on this important issue.



The eight state representatives pictured above were instrumental in protecting your TEA membership from out-of-state interest groups determined to weaken TEA and silence your voice in the Tennessee General Assembly. (L to R top row) Reps. Harry Brooks, Kent Calfee, Jim Coley, Kevin Dunlap, (L to R bottom row) Craig Fitzhugh, Johnnie Turner, Eddie Smith and Mark White stood with us on this important vote.

TEA vigilant on voucher fight as legislative session comes to an end

Out-of-state privatizers are facing the final days to get a private school voucher bill passed this legislative session. TEA is anticipating a last-minute hail mary attempt to force this unwanted and unneeded legislation into Tennessee law. We will be there to stop these attempts until the final gavel drops.

The proposed voucher bill is currently “on the clerk’s desk.” This means it would take a majority vote of the House to bring the bill up for consideration. Considering that bill sponsor Rep. Bill Dunn was unable to build enough support for the bill to pass, we do not expect him to find enough votes to consider the bill again this session.

Regardless, TEA will remain vigilant to ensure our students and our public schools are protected from out-of-state interest groups seeking to destroy public education in Tennessee.



Both chambers unanimous in passing hold harmless

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legislation now awaits Governor Haslam’s signature.

The legislation says that if TNReady scores result in a lower overall evaluation score for a teacher, those scores will not be used in a teacher’s evaluation. Conversely, if including TNReady scores improves a teacher’s overall score, the scores may be included. The goal is to provide maximum flexibility during the transition to the new test.

“TEA pushed for a complete waiver of TNReady scores even before the technical problems with test administration,” said TEA President Barbara Gray. “We are pleased to see the General Assembly get behind this effort to help ease the transition to the new test.”

TEA has also been calling for a hold harmless provision for schools and districts. That policy is not included in the administration’s bill. It’s still not clear how the new tests will impact accountability measures tied to schools and districts. However, during testimony before legislative committees, officials with the Department of Education assured lawmakers that school accountability would not be negatively impacted by TNReady scores.

“We are glad to hear a positive commitment from the Department of Education regarding holding schools harmless,” said TEA Chief Lobbyist Jim Wrye. “The unanimous support for this bill shows it is a common sense solution to what has been a challenging year with the new TNReady test.”

Wrye stressed the importance of teachers sharing their stories with legislators to this and other key education legislation.

“Stories from teachers make a real difference on education policy,” Wrye said. “Teachers from across the state shared their TNReady stories with lawmakers and that made the difference. It’s imperative that teachers continue sharing how state level policy impacts the classroom. When teachers talk, lawmakers listen.”



Future Teachers of America experienced political action first-hand during Civication on March 22. Following a day of lobbying on Capitol Hill, future educators gathered in the TEA lobby to celebrate a major victory of this legislative session. Thanks to countless educators and supporters united through TEA, a bill targeting payroll dues deduction by TEA members was defeated in House education committee in a 4-6 vote.

MAKE SURE YOUR EDUCATION VOICE IS HEARD!



Legislators who stood with us need your vote in the primary

They stood with us against school vouchers, prepared to protect the “free public schools” in what was widely anticipated to be a brutal House floor fight, and now they need our support.

Because of the bipartisan coalition of legislators united across Tennessee by the idea that public schools, students and educators deserve to be celebrated for their success and need more support, out-of-state privatizers did not have enough votes to push through their dangerous and unproven voucher schemes in Tennessee. Now the privatizers are targeting teachers’ political power as well as the legislators who supported us.

“We remain the largest and strongest advocate standing in the way of out-of-state privatizers who want to take funds from public schools,” said TEA Executive Director Carolyn Crowder. “These groups have seen how powerful we are and are now trying to undermine our power by attacking our supporters in the legislature.”

Representatives like Karen Camper, Barbara Cooper, Bud Hulsey, David Byrd, Antonio Parkinson and many others believe that when it comes to public education in the Tennessee Legislature, teachers, education support professionals and administrators know best how to improve our system of “free public schools,” as outlined in the Tennessee Constitution.

“We know vouchers and other privatization schemes won’t help our students,” Crowder said. “These legislators trust us when it comes to educating our students, and that’s why they vote to support our values. Please vote to keep them in the General Assembly during early voting that starts July 15 and in the August 4 primary.”

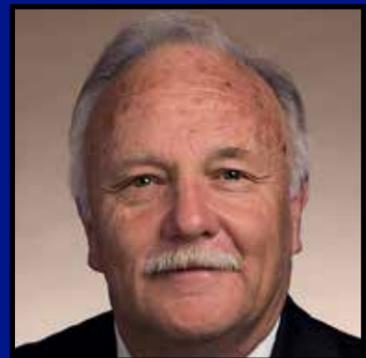
OPEN STATE PRIMARY: August 4

EARLY VOTING BEGINS: JULY 15

WE NEED TO KEEP THE FRIENDS OF PUBLIC EDUCATION WHO STOOD WITH US TO PROTECT OUR STUDENTS, OUR SCHOOLS AND OUR PROFESSION.



REP. ANTONIO PARKINSON
D-MEMPHIS



REP. BUD HULSEY
R-KINGSPORT

Reps. Parkinson and Hulsey are just two of many friends of public education we must help to re-elect! Their primary is the only election they will have.



EVERY EDUCATOR REGISTERED TO VOTE CAN PARTICIPATE IN THE STATE OPEN PRIMARY!

Voting history, campaign contributions or even party preference is not a factor in Tennessee.

The winners of many primary elections will be the next legislators to serve in the Tennessee General Assembly. This means you can’t wait until November to elect your next state senator or representative!

Early voting starts July 15, primary day is August 4.

Vote for the legislators who stood with us! Let’s stand for them!

IMPROVING BEP from page 1

2007. Included among the changes is a requirement that districts spend their BEP instructional funds on teacher compensation if their average salary falls below the state average.

In recent years, teacher pay raise funds haven’t been getting to teachers. That’s because of the elimination of the state minimum pay scale championed by former Commissioner of Education Kevin Huffman. So, teachers have been seeing raises at half or even one third of what was approved and funded by the legislature. With the new changes, teachers in almost

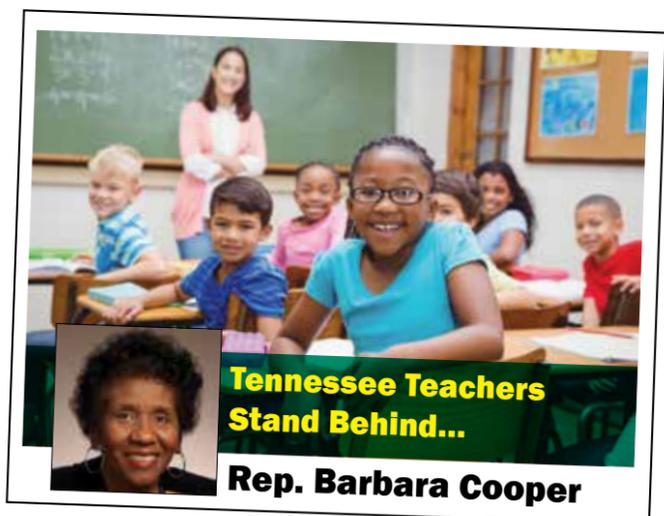
every district in the state will see raises that closely match legislative appropriations. This is because the BEP change forces local school boards to spend salary funds on improving teacher pay unless they already pay above the state average. This common sense idea means more money in teachers’ paychecks.

“We appreciate Governor Haslam taking this step to improve teacher pay in the state,” said TEA President Barbara Gray. “Not only does his budget provide over \$100 million in new salary funds, but also if the proposed BEP changes are adopted, that will mean most teachers will receive a 4 percent

raise this year. That’s great news.”

TEA has been pressing the administration and legislators to ensure that when the General Assembly passes a raise, it gets into teachers’ pockets. While a return to the state minimum salary schedule is the best way to make this happen, Governor Haslam’s proposal is a big step in the right direction. Tennessee teachers deserve professional pay for the challenging work they do every day.

TEA will continue to advocate for BEP improvements that leverage local dollars as well as putting state dollars into teacher pay increases.



TEA sent mailers to districts of the legislators like Rep. Barbara Cooper who stood with Tennessee public school employees against vouchers and other bad ideas. If you received a mailer like the one above, be sure to vote in the primary, supporting the legislator who supports you and your profession.

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District 13 — Mary Campbell, Susan Dalton, Metro Nashville, 531 Fairground Court, Nashville, TN 37211; (615)347-6578 (Campbell), (615)476-3161 (Dalton), fax: (855)299-4968 (Campbell), (855)299-5837 (Dalton); Assns: Cumberland Uni., Dept. of Higher Ed., Metro Nashville, TN School For The Blind, Lebanon, Wilson. **District 14 — Maria Uffelman**, P.O. Box 99, Cumberland City, TN 37050; phone: (931)827-3333, fax: (855)299-4925; Assns: Austin Peay State Uni., Clarksville-Montgomery, Robertson. **District 15 — Cheryl Richardson**, P.O. Box 354, Goodlettsville, TN 37070; phone: (615)630-2601, fax: (888)519-4879; Assns: Benton, West Carroll, Central, Clarksburg, Huntingdon, McKenzie, Henry, Paris, Houston, Humphreys, Stewart, Cheatham, Dickson, Hickman. **District 16 — Lorrie Butler**, P.O. Box 387, Henderson, TN 38340; (731)989-4860, fax: (855)299-4591; Assns: Chester, Hardeman, West TSD, Henderson, Lexington, Jackson-Madison, Jackson State Comm. College,

McNairy, Decatur, Hardin. **District 17 — Terri Jones**, P.O. Box 2140, Cordova, TN 38088; (901)258-3902, fax: (844)270-8083; Assns: Crockett, Dyer, Dyersburg, Dyersburg State Comm. College, Gibson, Humboldt, Milan, Trenton, Haywood, Lake, Lauderdale, Obion, Union City, UT-Martin, Tipton, Weakley. **District 18 — Zandra Foster**, 3897 Homewood Cove, Memphis, TN 38128; (901)377-9472, fax: (855)320-8737;—Assns: Bartlett, Collierville, Fayette, Germantown-Arlington-Lakeland, Millington, Southwest State Comm. College, Uni. of Memphis. **District 19 — Assns: TEA West — Karla Carpenter, UniServ Field Manager; UniServ Directors: Glenda Jones, Tom Marchand, Terri Jones**, 6520 Stage Road, Bartlett, TN 38134; phone/fax (901)379-6939; www.unitedshelby.org.

www.teateachers.org
www.nea.org

Bathroom bill revived

A bill restricting bathroom and facility access to a person's gender at birth was unanimously deferred to summer study last week in the same committee that saw the payroll bill defeated, but is also on the special calendar for April 5.

Sponsored by Rep. Susan Lynn (R-Mount Juliet) and Sen. Mike Bell (R-Riceville), HB2414 would put Tennessee Title IX funding in jeopardy, putting the state on the hook for up to \$1 billion if it were to comply with the proposed measure.

Even though the House Education Administration and Planning Committee voted to defer the bill last Tuesday, Rep. Jim Coley (R-Bartlett) made a motion to force the committee to reconsider its action.

Following an hour-long discussion in the Senate Education Committee, the bill passed with a vote of 7-2, and was sent to the Senate Finance Committee.

Supporters of the bill keep pressing ahead in spite of warnings from the State Department of Education and Governor Bill Haslam, who have cautioned that the proposed measure would put

the state education funding at risk.

"Tennessee educators and school systems have been dealing with this issue without a need to deplete our school funding," said TEA President Barbara Gray. "With so many crucial education needs still not addressed by the legislature, this bill is an unfortunate example of what happens in election-year politics."

Opponents of the bill have continually noted that it would be harmful to transgender students, some of whom testified last week during hearings on the proposed bill, with an overflow crowd watching.

"I just don't think it's appropriate, nor do I think it's necessary," said Rep. Craig Fitzhugh (D-Ripley).

Rep. Rick Womick (R-Rockvale) said the bill is an example of government getting involved in something it should not be tackling.

Several lawmakers changed their view on the issue after impassioned testimony from students and their parents during hearings last week.

There are hundreds of education bills filed during the session. Below is a partial list of bills of interest.

Bills TEA Supports

HB1794/SB2030 (Byrd/Briggs) - Expanding tenure eligibility
This would expand tenure eligibility to teachers whose evaluations rate them as effective, or a 3, rather than just 4 and 5 as in current law.

HB2378/SB2336 (Van Huss/Nicely)- Caps time students spend on standardized testing.

HB2503/SB2525 (Brooks, K./Dickerson) - Preference for tenured teachers
This would establish a preference for effective tenured teachers to be retained over non-tenured teachers in the event of a staff reduction.

HB1537/SB2540 (McCormick/Norris) - Release of test questions
Requires release of test questions and answers to parents and teachers, notification of and justification for all assessments, and eliminates two standardized tests.

HB2200/SB2351 (Dunn/Dickerson)- Calls for a moratorium on ASD expansion, among other changes.

Bills TEA Opposes

HB1049/SB999 (Dunn/Gardenhire) - Voucher bill
This is the private school voucher bill.

HJR493 (Dunn)- Constitutional Amendment
Amends the state constitution of Tennessee to emphasize the legislature has sole discretion in determining education policy. Attempts to remove the court's ability to review school funding and other policies.

HB2229/SB1707 (Spivey/Gresham) - Attack on payroll dues
This is another attack on payroll deduction, that would include all school systems, including the state special schools. This bill would eliminate payroll deduction for anything except benefits provided through the LEA or charitable contributions to a 501(c)(3)"

HB985/SB466 (Rogers/Bell) - Keeping teachers off county commissions
This would prohibit teachers from serving on their county commissions.

HB1879/SB2497 (Kane/Gresham) - Bypassing LEAs in favor of private schools
Creates a catalog of online courses that would enable portability of per pupil funding to go to private schools and online providers, bypassing the LEA's ability to make decisions about offerings.



TEA
TENNESSEE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

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School grading bill signed by governor

A bill that would implement a statewide letter grade system for Tennessee public schools has been signed by Governor Bill Haslam last week after passing the House and Senate with little debate.

Sponsored by Sen. Dolores Gresham (R-Somerville) and Rep. Glen Casada (R-Franklin), the bill is yet another bad idea for Tennessee public schools brought to you by out-of-state privatizers aiming to further demean teachers and deflate the value of their work.

Slated to be implemented during the 2017-18 academic year, the bill will assign letter grades to schools — A, B, C, D or F — based on student achievement, student growth data and other factors yet to be determined by the Tennessee State Board of Education, which can use

a wide latitude of inputs and measures.

An earlier concept of the bill proposed grading schools solely based on TVAAS, an idea TEA vigorously opposed.

Critics of the bill pointed out that it would bring more confusion and distrust in the state's education system, further stigmatizing schools and communities with low-income populations.

"Letter-grading schools is always a bad idea, no matter if you use ACT scores, high school graduation rates, TCAP scores or attendance and truancy to give grades," said TEA President Barbara Gray. "It has been proven that letter grades can never be an accurate reflection of

what is working in a school, or provide the community with helpful information. As we fight to fix and restore trust in our state's school funding model and its broken evaluation system, our legislature keeps focusing on measures that will further alienate school systems in different parts of the state. That is simply unacceptable."

The annual state report card already includes school demographics, proficiency on state tests and improvement on state tests. Casada's bill does not eliminate or alter existing criteria on the report card.

The first organization to praise the bill's success in Tennessee legislature was Students First, a longtime proponent of privatization and unfounded education "reform" ideas.

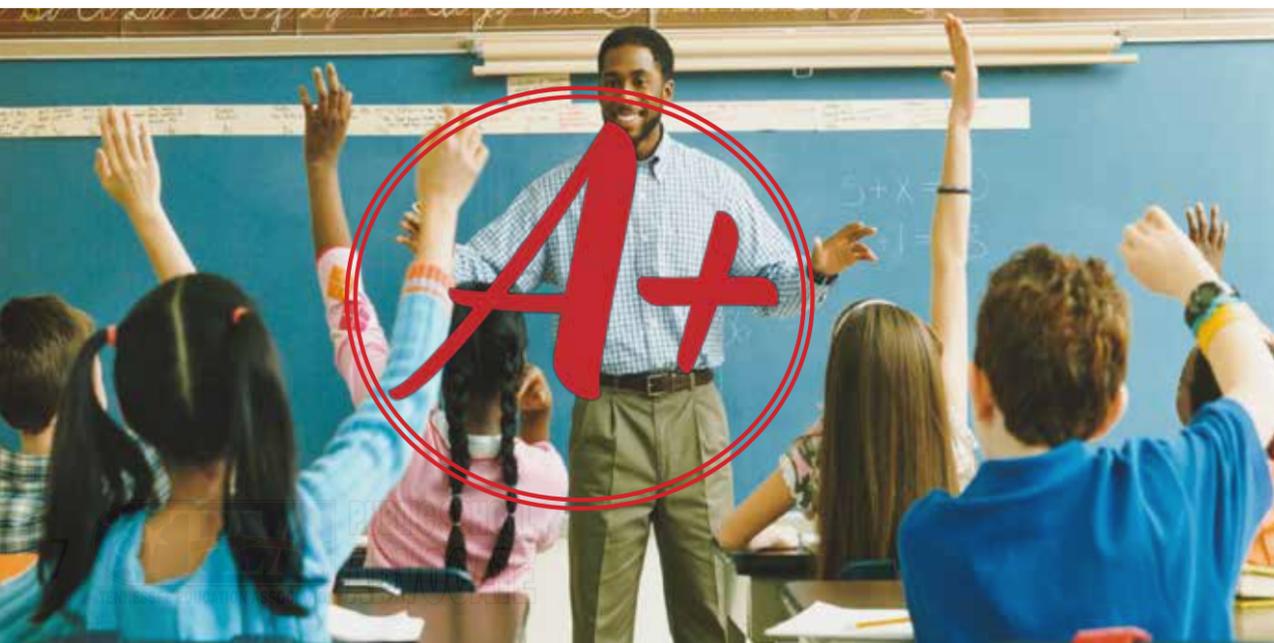
The idea of grading schools received plenty of criticism in states that have adopted it, including Florida, Virginia, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Texas.

For instance, North Carolina teachers said letter grades don't accurately reflect school quality as much as a school neighborhood's socioeconomic makeup.

"Tennessee already has school report cards, which are accessible online," Gray said. "Anyone interested in researching schools can look up information ranging from proficiency rates to racial achievement gaps."

The letter-grading bill arrived in Tennessee from the Foundation for Excellence in Education, founded by former Republican presidential candidate and former Florida Gov. Jeb Bush.

The foundation pushed for passage of similar legislation in 16 other states. This is another example of out-of-state special interests meddling in Tennessee public education.



Be a delegate to the TEA Representative Assembly

Run for office, help protect our schools and profession!

May 13-14, 2016



2016 Assembly to convene in Cool Springs

Hundreds of delegates from local affiliates across Tennessee and student chapters on college campuses are expected to attend the annual business meeting of the Tennessee Education Association set for May 13-14 at the Franklin Marriott Hotel in Cool Springs.

The new location is expected to further ease access and comfort of attendees, as well as provide

them with better dining and entertainment options after the close of RA business on Friday night and Saturday afternoon.

Elections for the TEA Board of Directors top the convention agenda, along with announcing award winners and voting on new business items and proposed changes to the association's bylaws defining future TEA activities.

2016 TEA RA Elections

President
Vice President

TEA-FCPE Executive Council

District 2 Two-year unexpired term

District 4 Three-year term

District 6 Three-year term

District 7 Three-year term

District 8 Three-year term

District 10 Three-year term

District 11 Three-year term

District 14 Three-year term

District 15 Three-year term

TEA Board of Directors

District 4 Three-year term

District 5 Two-year unexpired term

District 7 Three-year term

District 10 Three-year term

District 14 Three-year term

District 15 Two-year unexpired term

Contact your local association president to be a part of the 2016 TEA Representative Assembly!

Join your colleagues from across the state at the fabulous Franklin Marriott Hotel, Cool Springs.



TEA members line up to vote during the 2015 TEA Representative Assembly in Cool Springs. Any TEA member can run for office in the local, state and national association.