



Nevada State
Education Association

NSEA

www.nsea-nv.org



NEVADA STATE EDUCATION ASSOCIATION

2019

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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NSEA is prepared to provide background information and research on a variety of issues affecting education in Nevada. If you are a member of the media, please contact NSEA Director of Communications **Nick Di Archangel** at the phone and email listed above.

Introduction to the Nevada State Education Association (NSEA)

The Nevada State Education Association has enjoyed a long and rich tradition as a respected voice for education in our state. NSEA serves as representative to teachers and other licensed staff and Education Support Professionals (ESPs) across the state. The primary mission of NSEA is to advocate for and empower members by providing a united, political and professional voice to ensure the right to quality public education. Educating children is what we know, what we do, and what matters most to us. The organization is extremely active in promoting opportunities for professional awareness, growth, and empowerment. NSEA is a leader not only in the political arena but in the professional development area as well. We take pride in serving as a well-balanced, democratic organization which attempts to serve the best interests of our members while meeting the needs of the students we teach and the communities we serve.



NSEA's Core Values

Member Driven

We believe in a member driven organization, created and democratically governed by members. As stewards of the organization, members determine the legislative agenda, provide financial oversight, and craft the guiding principles of the organization.

Justice

We believe in the protection of member rights. We believe that the collective bargaining process is essential for the fair and just treatment of members.

Equality

We believe public education is the basis for a strong and healthy society which results from quality schools, quality educators, quality students, and quality communities.

School Funding, A Statewide Crisis

From West Virginia to Oklahoma, Kentucky to Arizona, teachers and other educators have taken to the streets and their state houses to demand better pay and school funding. Meanwhile, here in Nevada, most school districts have been struggling to close budget deficits and have left Nevada educators with little or nothing extra for salaries and benefits.

At 47 in the nation, the issue of school funding in Nevada tops nearly everyone's list of priorities.

NSEA was the loudest voice in Carson City for increased school funding during the last year, calling attention to IP1 room tax money and marijuana tax money that never supplemented education spending. Unfortunately, an education budget was passed that didn't even keep up with the increased cost of doing business. Compounding matters, in a last-minute move, new marijuana retail tax dollars were sent to the rainy-day fund. More than \$42 million now sits in the rainy-day fund while our schools are in crisis.

Education spending hasn't translated into competitive salaries and benefits for teachers and ESPs. Nevada continues to face a vexing teacher and staff shortage. That means a parade of substitute teachers, uneven teaching and learning, and instability and uncertainty for thousands of our children. Meanwhile, the cost of healthcare tends to be a burden on both educators



and school districts who redirect monies that would otherwise go to salaries into covering increased employer healthcare costs. Increased premiums and copays without corresponding increases in pay mean less overall money for educators. As the economy and overall job market improves, careers in the education field are less and less financially appealing. Creation of a dedicated source of funding for licensed educators and support professionals will enable Nevada to be competitive in recruiting in the best personnel to educate our students.

The State of Nevada has a vast interest in a well prepared, well educated work force, and a failure to adequately fund public education will ultimately reduce the standard of living for all Nevadans. To meet the needs of Nevada's students, the legislature must provide the necessary resources.



NSEA has asked that Governor Sandoval call a special session now to deal with teacher pay and the school funding crisis in 2018. We remain committed to creating a dedicated funding mechanism for the salary and benefits of both licensed educators and education support professionals. A special session in 2018 is critical to making this happen.

To address these concerns, **NSEA SUPPORTS:**

- Immediate use of marijuana retail tax in rainy day fund for dedicated pay for teachers, other licensed personnel, and education support professionals.
- Intended use of 2009 IP1 room tax revenue as a supplement to required education spending.
- Fixing property tax loophole to better fund education.
- Funding of an educator loan forgiveness program to help attract and retain teachers, licensed professionals, and education support professionals.

Public Education, The Great Equalizer

Over the last two sessions, Education Savings Account vouchers (ESAs) have been one of the highest profile and polarizing issues at the legislature. NEA considers private school vouchers to be a serious threat to the institution of public education. NSEA members resoundingly oppose ESA vouchers. In our survey of nearly 1000 educators in early 2018, more than 80% oppose ESA vouchers with just 12% supporting. NSEA's campaign to keep public monies in public schools during the last session was effective. With well-funded entities continuing their push for ESA's in Nevada, we need to remain vigilant to protect public funds in public schools. This includes making sure that the one-time enhancement of \$20M into the voucher-lite Opportunity Scholarship program is instead redirected into K-12 public education next biennium.



Meanwhile, the institution of public education that we are protecting is fundamentally about equity—giving opportunity and leveling the playing field for all students in the state. NSEA has been a strong supporter of the state's Zoom School and Victory School programs, providing additional resources to school sites with large concentrations of English language learners and low-income and at-risk students. Last session NSEA was a part of the development of SB178 to begin the implementation of the weighted funding formula to begin to get additional resources to these students at other school sites across the state. **For NSEA, this is an education equity and social justice issue for all Nevada students.** Last session, it was estimated that full-implementation of the weighted funding

formula would require an additional investment of \$850M by FY21. So, we appreciate that these efforts are tied to the question of adequate education funding as well as an overall update of the Nevada Plan, our state's education funding system.

To address these concerns, **NSEA SUPPORTS:**

- Elimination of Education Savings Account language in the Nevada Revised Statutes.
- Redirection of \$20M one-time enhancement to Opportunity Scholarships to supplement public education budget.
- Continuation of the successful Zoom and Victory School models.
- Full implementation of the weighted funding formula.



More Learning, Less Testing

Last session, NSEA sponsored *Time to Teach, Not Test* (SB303) to provide for an audit of student assessments in Nevada with the aim of identifying inefficiencies in student testing. Currently, the Department of Education is conducting full audit of student assessments at every grade level. This audit will give decision makers the information necessary to streamline student assessments and eliminate any unnecessary and redundant tests in the next legislative session.



SB 303 began the process of reducing the focus on high-stakes, standardized tests, so students have more time to learn and teachers have more time to teach. A top priority for our members in the next legislative session will be to implement the

audit recommendation to streamline student assessments and shift education decision making back into the hands of local educators, parents, and communities.

A major focus during last legislative session was the issue of teacher evaluations tied to student test scores. Progress was made with the passage of AB312, which instead tied 40% of teacher evaluations to Student Learning Goals (SLG's). While this was a significant step in the right direction, we believe that the percentage is too high and should be reduced if not eliminated altogether.

Given these developments, **NSEA SUPPORTS:**

- Streamlining Nevada's assessment systems, eliminating unnecessary and duplicative assessments.
- Amending the Nevada Educator Performance Framework to reduce the percentage of teacher evaluations based on SLG's.

High Quality Teaching and Education

NSEA believes attracting and retaining qualified teachers in every classroom and for every subject is critical for all Nevadans. Meanwhile, it is also critical to provide our educators, both licensed employees and education support professionals, with appropriate professional development opportunities to gain and improve the knowledge and skills important to their positions and job performance.

Peer Assistance and Review (PAR) is an important program to assist new teachers and those whose practice is in need of improvement. PAR not only improves classroom instruction, but it is an important program to retain qualified classroom teachers. Last session, NSEA engaged SB300 for continued support of the PAR program at CCSD as well as providing support to the state's first PAR program at WCSD and an expansion of Peer Assistance and Review statewide.

Over the last several years, NSEA has been developing our professional development programming with a focus on support for teachers getting their National Board Certification as well as expanding training for Education Support Professionals across the state.

To address these concerns, the **NSEA SUPPORTS:**

- Additional resources for Professional Development programs, including support for National Board Certification Training.
- New resources for professional development for Education Support Professionals.
- Support for Peer Assistance and Review in all Nevada school districts.



Member Protection

We believe public education is the foundation of democracy and the cornerstone of a civil and free society. And there is no more important component to public education than the people who do the work. As the representative of teachers and other licensed educators and Education Support Professionals across the state, NSEA is committed to the well-being and protection of our members. This includes safety and rights in the workplace, our collective bargaining rights, as well as access to life's necessities like healthcare and security in retirement.



NSEA engaged in efforts last session to strengthen our collective bargaining rights. Unfortunately, we saw several Governor vetoes of bills we supported. Our efforts to elect a pro-public education and pro-labor Governor will be critical to passage of this legislation during the upcoming session.

Like many other Nevadans, educators across the state face difficulty accessing quality, affordable healthcare. This affects active educators, and especially retirees who are not eligible for Medicare or are living in areas without good health provider options. We believe that healthcare is a right, and that the state should step in to ensure that those who have served to educate our kids have access to the healthcare they need to live with dignity.

During the session, NSEA and its local affiliate ESEA raised concerns specific to Education Support Professionals—calling attention to education employees paid less than a living wage and the increased potential for outsourcing jobs amidst the reorganization of the Clark County School District. Education Support Professionals are a critical component of the family of educators in our schools. Students have a range of needs that must be met in order for learning to take place. Transportation professionals make sure our kids arrive safely in the morning and return home the same way. Nutrition professionals make sure no child is trying to learn on an empty stomach. Custodial and maintenance keep the learning environment clean and safe. Tech professionals do the necessary task of keeping our students online. Para-professionals tirelessly support students in their learning. Clerical support staff do about 30 different jobs as well as give out smiles and Band-Aids. When trusted educators are replaced by private contractors, the overall quality and safety of our public education system is compromised.

Workplace safety was another key focus for NSEA during the 2017 session. We sponsored SB386 to make improvements to Nevada’s system of progressive student discipline and to expand it to all other school facilities, including transportation. While progress was made legislatively on this issue, much still needs to be done on the resourcing and implementation end.

To that end, **NSEA SUPPORTS:**

- Strengthening the state’s collective bargaining provisions to ease timelines on the selection of arbitrators, clarify leave opportunities for bargaining, and ensuring rollover of economic provisions beyond the expiration date of a contract.
- Defending Nevada PERS in order to preserve the system’s health and defined benefit status.
- Ensuring every educator (and their family) has access to quality, affordable health care including affordable prescription coverage.
- Ensuring a living wage for all education employees and prohibiting outsourcing of public jobs.
- Strengthening Nevada’s progressive student discipline law—providing resources for addressing student discipline and behavior issues.

NSEA LOBBY TEAM

The members of the Nevada State Education Association Lobby Team:

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| NSEA Government Relations Committee Chairperson | Phil Kaiser |
| ESEA President | Virginia Mills |
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| UCN President | Andy Piper |
| WEA President | Natha Anderson |
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