

NSEA PUBLIC COMMENT TO NVBOE 10.8.20

The Nevada State Education Association has been the voice of Nevada educators for over 100 years.

NSEA asks the Nevada Board of Education to take a position in support of AJR1 from the 32nd Special Session. AJR1 would generate critical new revenue for Nevada, by amending the Constitution to increase the mining tax from 5% of net proceeds to 7.75% of gross proceeds. This would generate \$485 million in new revenue for Nevada. Included in AJR1 is a provision that dedicates 25% of revenues that could be spent for educational purposes.

Governor Sisolak called the 31st Special Session to address the severe state budget impact of the COVID-19 health crisis. On the first day of that session, hundreds of educators donned red face coverings and lined both sides of the street from the Legislative building to the Capitol with a clear call to Fund Healthy Schools. We chanted “Be Brave. Be Bold. New Revenue’s the Way to Go!”

Educators mobilized for new revenue as the Governor presented hundreds of millions of dollars in painful cuts, including \$156 million in cuts to K-12 public education. Unfortunately, new revenues were not passed by the legislature in either special session. Instead, we have been left with education cuts into the bone, including class size reduction and programs for our most vulnerable students like Read by Grade 3 and weighted funding for English learners and at-risk students. These cuts, especially to weighted funding, make successful implementation of the new funding plan impossible, necessitating the delay of implementation of SB543.

We know there is another side of this economic crisis, with billionaires amassing significant new wealth. Nevada is the world’s 5th largest producer of gold. Large mining companies have been making record profits with gold selling near record highs of \$1900/oz, yet the mining industry pays very little in state taxes.

While legislators failed to pass new revenue this summer, they did pass several proposals to amend the Constitution to raise mining taxes. AJR1 is the proposal that would deliver the most resources to K-12 public education. A half-billion dollars in new revenue for Nevada is the right-sized treatment of an industry that has enjoyed a sweetheart deal since Nevada’s beginnings. The proposal is also significant enough to move the needle on the chronic underfunding of Nevada’s schools and other vital services Nevada families depend upon. If passed during the 2021 Legislative Session, AJR1 would go before Nevada voters in 2022.

NSEA has been working to address the chronic underfunding of public education in Nevada for decades. While passage of AJR1 is only a part of what is needed to deliver a high-quality public education to every Nevada student, it is a most critical next step.