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NATIONAL NEWS

Policies Should Reflect the Importance of Teaching

Education Week

By: Michelle Rhee

January 17, 2012

<http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2012/01/17/18rhee.h31.html?tkn=WMRFFZ7J73Ldw2WzU9wVh8ULePEIbjM3laaa&cmp=clp-edweek>

I always knew our teachers were undervalued for the critical work they do, but nothing made that more apparent than the [front page](#) of *The New York Times* the other day. The paper reported on a groundbreaking [study](#) that found teachers have a far more lasting and wide-ranging effect on students than most people ever realized.

Economists at Harvard and Columbia universities looked at the lives of 2.5 million students over 20 years—an undertaking far broader and more detailed than seen in previous studies.

But it's not just the scope of the study that makes it so remarkable. The study's findings also are astounding. They show that students who had highly effective elementary and middle school teachers went on to have much better outcomes in life than students who had lower-performing teachers.

We're not talking about small advantages. The kids with more effective teachers had lower teen-pregnancy rates and higher college-enrollment rates than their peers. They also had higher earnings, lived in better neighborhoods, and even saved more for retirement. I'm a parent, and I want my daughters to have those kinds of successes in life. Certainly I'm not alone.

The economists measured teacher effectiveness by looking at the degree to which a teacher's students posted gains on achievement tests. In other words, teachers who helped kids make academic progress, as measured on these tests, also impacted kids' lives in other incredibly rich, meaningful, and lasting ways.

There are critics who argue that a teacher's ability to help kids make gains on tests doesn't amount to much. They say that all it shows is that a teacher can teach to a test or show a child how to fill in a bubble. I'm not sure how anyone can still make those arguments in light of the new study's critical findings.

Being economists, the authors laid out in financial terms the benefits of staffing our schools with effective teachers. They found that substituting even just an average teacher for an ineffective one would raise a single classroom's lifetime earnings by about \$266,000. That's just in a single year. Imagine the benefits when that happens regularly over time.

So, given the potential impact our teachers have on our kids and society, isn't it time to rethink how we assign, retain, evaluate, and pay educators? Shouldn't we take a hard look at teacher-layoff and teacher-tenure policies?

Let's consider pay. The average teacher in America makes roughly \$55,000 a year. That's pretty paltry when you consider what's at stake. What's more, the way salaries increase over a teacher's career is outdated. Teachers typically receive salary bumps for time on the job or for earning advanced degrees that aren't actually linked to student achievement. The new study confirms that what matters most, and what teachers really ought to be rewarded for, is the ability to help kids make academic progress. Given the link between effective educators and their students' later earnings, shouldn't we be putting more money into our best teachers' paychecks now?

But teacher pay is only part of the story. What about our efforts, or lack thereof, to keep our best teachers on the job so they can serve as many kids as possible? In most districts, when teacher layoffs arise during difficult economic times like the ones we're currently facing, the last teacher hired is generally the first one let go. This often happens without any regard whatsoever to a teacher's job performance. As a result, some of our most effective teachers are shown the door. Such policies are unconscionable in light of the economists' study.

Similarly, when it comes to evaluations, most teachers are reviewed infrequently and without even a glance at student-achievement data. To keep that up, in light of what we now know, is ridiculous. The academic progress of our kids shouldn't be the only basis for reviewing our teachers, but it has to start playing a significant role in evaluations.

In fact, whether our kids are actually learning, and to what degree, should be the central focus of all the decisionmaking in our schools. Too often, our education policies are now dictated by adult interests rather than student needs. That has to change. We all know the concerns parents face each year as they await news about who will be teaching their children come September. No doubt, this study will add to those concerns and fuel efforts by parents to ensure their kids are assigned great teachers. But, really, should anyone have to worry about that? Shouldn't all kids benefit from being in classrooms with highly effective educators? I think so, and I think most moms and dads would agree with me.

Michelle Rhee is the founder and chief executive officer of [StudentsFirst](#), a bipartisan grassroots movement to transform the nation's education system based in Sacramento, Calif. She previously was the chancellor of the District of Columbia Public Schools and the CEO of [The New Teacher Project](#), which seeks to recruit and train effective teachers.

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STATE NEWS

Louisiana Governor Jindal calls for changes

Baton Rouge Advocate

By: Will Sentell

January 18, 2012

<http://theadvocate.com/home/1826105-125/jindal-calls-for-changes.html>

Gov. Bobby Jindal called for sweeping changes Tuesday in how teachers are paid and evaluated and for an expansion of state aid for students to attend private and parochial schools.

"Make no mistake, this is the most important thing we can do to improve the quality of life for our children and our state," Jindal said of his 2012 public schools agenda.

However, his proposal to change the way public school teachers are paid and rated is sure to be controversial during the legislative session, which begins on March 12.

The governor spelled out his plans during a 30-minute speech at the annual meeting of the Louisiana Association of Business and Industry and in comments to reporters afterwards.

Jindal said he wants to:

- Allow local school districts to pay top-flight teachers more and block pay hikes for those considered ineffective.
- Ensure that current teachers are stripped of their certification if they are rated as ineffective for three years.
- Require new teachers to be rated as "highly effective" for five years in a row before they earn tenure. Tenure is designed to protect educators against unfair firings.

Under current rules, teachers typically get tenure after three years in the classroom unless they encounter major problems.

Jindal said the change would "make tenure an active process rather than an automatic one" and a reward for good work, not that teachers "merely survived for three years."

"This is a bold plan and a signal to teachers at all career stages that help is on the way," he said.

But a teacher union leader criticized efforts to change tenure rules, which she called unnecessary.

"All it is, is your day in court," said Joyce Haynes, president of the Louisiana Association of Educators.

"They have earned it," Haynes said of teachers.

In another area, Jindal called for the expansion of Louisiana's school "scholarship" program, also called "vouchers," which provides state tax dollar payments for low-income students attending low-performing public schools so they can attend private or parochial schools instead.

The new rules would apply to students from low-income families if they attend schools rated "C," "D" or "F" under the state's new school rating system, which began last year.

What the expansion would cost is unclear.

Jindal told reporters after his speech that such aid is less than public school students typically get through the Minimum Foundation Program, called MFP, and could mean savings for the state.

"If you look at MFP dollars versus the scholarship program it is more than \$4,000 cheaper," he said of per student spending.

About 72 percent of public schools were given a “C,” “D” or “F” last year, aides to the governor said.

Exactly how many students at those schools would meet income rules, and be eligible for the state aid, is unclear.

Critics say the aid, which they call vouchers, is a drain of state dollars to public schools.

But Danny Loar, executive director of the Louisiana Conference of Catholic Bishops, praised the governor’s proposal.

“We definitely support it,” Loar said. “We think that children should not be trapped in failing schools and parents should have the ability to take them to a good school, whether it is a charter school, public school or private school.”

Jindal said students who get the aid would be subject to the same tests given to public school students, such as LEAP and iLEAP.

The governor also said he wants to end the use of seniority in making school personnel decisions, including layoffs.

He also wants to let local school districts set their own pay scales for new teachers based on subjects taught and other issues.

Jindal said too often all teachers are treated the same, regardless of performance.

“This has to stop,” he said. “We’re going to run our education system and our economy into the ground unless we reform this backwards structure today.”

In another area, Jindal said he wants nonprofit groups and others to apply directly to the state to open charter schools, which are public classrooms run by non-governmental boards.

Under current rules, such groups have to first seek approval from local school boards, which are often hostile to such proposals.

Steve Monaghan, president of the Louisiana Federation of Teachers, was unavailable for comment on Tuesday.

Les Landon, spokesman for the group, criticized Jindal’s suggestion that tenured teachers can only lose their jobs if they are caught selling drugs, or something similar.

“It is unfortunate that the tone of the governor’s speech was so offensive to teachers,” Landon said.

He said the LFT will also oppose the governor’s plan to expand state aid for some students to attend private and parochial schools.

Brigitte Nieland, a vice president of LABI, praised Jindal’s school plans, including efforts to link a teacher’s job status to how they fare under Louisiana’s new annual evaluation law and more “scholarships” for low-income students.

“I think, if this bill passes, consumers will have more options than they have ever had before in this state,” Nieland said.

Jindal also proposed that:

- Students who graduate from high school early get a postsecondary scholarship equal to half of what the state would have spent on them if they had remained in high school.
- Parents be allowed to initiate state takeovers of failing schools.
- The state set up an accountability program for early childhood classes.

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For New Jersey Governor Christie, 2012 Is the Year to Act on Education Reform – Again

New Jersey Spotlight

By: John Mooney

January 18, 2012

<http://www.njspotlight.com/stories/12/0117/2310/>

Teacher tenure gaining traction among lawmakers as debates on education continue to swirl

Christie continued to keep education a priority, but it was not with the same fanfare of a year ago when he trumpeted an aggressive reform package before the legislature and enjoyed the front-row audience of Michelle Rhee, the famous former Washington, D.C., chancellor.

But even while the reform message didn't carry the same oomph it once did, that is not to say education won't get a lot of attention in the year ahead, just maybe in different ways and hanging on different issues.

On the reform front, much of Christie's platform centering on teacher tenure and charter schools is already underway and being

carried by others, including prominent Democrats.

Of the six proposals he made yesterday, many mirroring those from last year, at least four of them have Democratic sponsors in the legislature.

The most notable one is tenure reform, a proposal to more closely tie teacher evaluation with student achievement that is being led by state Sen. Teresa Ruiz (D-Essex).

Her bill is different from Christie's in the severity of its sanctions, but it still would remake how tenure is granted and taken away. And gaining support from both sides of the aisle over the last several months, Ruiz said yesterday she will move quickly on the measure in the Senate Education committee that she chairs, filing a new bill last week that she said had some modest changes from the previous bill.

"Pronto," she said. "I want to have discussion with leadership to ensure we have a bill that is quality and is effective, and then we'll move."

Maybe more significant, Senate President Stephen Sweeney (D-Gloucester) promised there would be action on the bill sooner than later.

"We are going to do tenure reform this year. I am committed to getting it done, very much so and hopefully before the budget break," he said in an interview.

"In my mind, tenure will take longer to obtain, it will be harder to obtain, and it will be easier to lose," Sweeney said. "It's going to be pretty simple."

But while tenure reform has gained traction in Democratic circles and even the New Jersey Education Association has shown some support, albeit with its own package, not all of Christie's proposals have taken off as he once hoped.

While he proposed it again yesterday, Christie's push to end seniority as the determinant of when and whether a teacher is laid off appears no further along than a year ago.

"We're not going to do that," Sweeney said, echoing the comments of other leadership as well. "I have said it over and over again. He can call for that all he wants, it's a non-starter."

And while a year ago, Christie spoke of merit pay for teachers who excel, he instead said yesterday that bonuses should be for those in hard-to-fill positions, without mentioning merit pay.

"Pay teachers more when they are assigned to a failing school or to teach a difficult subject," he said. "Compensation should be designed to attract and retain effective teachers where we need them most."

The light also has dimmed on Christie's charter school push of last year, with his administration on the defensive against a barrage of criticism from suburban districts that are fighting back against the experimental schools.

Hearing the backlash, Christie yesterday didn't say suburbs should be spared entirely, but he repeated previous comments by pledging "to focus on our failing school districts ... We must give parents and children in failing schools an alternative."

The comments may not be just rhetoric, either, since the administration is about to announce a new round of charter approvals. That raised some concerns in other quarters, with the head of the state's charter school association saying he hoped the schools would be approved in all kinds of districts if they can prove to "enhance local learning opportunities."

"For those in New Jersey consumed with the suburban vs. urban charter school debate, their focus is misguided," said Carlos Perez, the association executive director.

But when it comes to education debates, the biggest one this year may concern money, not a new topic for Christie and one he only ratcheted up yesterday.

Christie has never hid his antipathy toward the state Supreme Court's *Abbott v. Burke* decisions that have led to hundreds of millions of additional dollars to urban schools districts, including last year when the court ordered an additional \$477 million on top of Christie's budget. Yesterday, Christie again called *Abbott v. Burke* a "failure."

"It is time to admit that the Supreme Court's grand experiment with New Jersey children is a failure," he said. "Sixty-three percent of state aid over the years has gone to the Abbott districts and the schools are still predominantly failing."

"What we've been doing isn't working for children in failing districts, it is unfair to the other 557 school districts and to our state's taxpayers, who spend more per pupil than almost any state in America," he said. "Basic human decency and simple common sense say it is time for a different and better approach."

He didn't detail what that approach will be, but his acting education commissioner, Chris Cerf, continues to work on a report that will lay out how the current funding formula can be adjusted, if not rewritten.

Democrats hopped on Christie's promise of 10 percent cut in income tax – or roughly \$1 billion in state revenues – as inevitably draining money from public schools, and probably urban ones.

"Where is that money going to come from, that is the key," said state Assemblyman Lou Greenwald (D-Camden), the new Assembly majority leader. "Will it be coming from urban school districts? Suburban school districts?"

Sweeney said the insinuation was clear. "We can't put any more money in education, that's what he said," the senator said. "That means he's taking it out."

But that's for Christie's next appearance before the legislature, when he presents his state budget in late February. And maybe 2012 will be the year of education after all, something that Christie himself conceded has taken a little longer than planned.

"Over the course of the last year, since outlining my proposals from this podium, I have worked with this legislature – on a bipartisan basis – to put in front of you a package of bills that will address the biggest challenges facing public education in New Jersey," he said yesterday.

"We have had a year to debate, discuss and deliberate. Now, in 2012, it is time to act."

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Arizona school-voucher push is revived

The Arizona Republic

By: Pat Kossan

January 17, 2012

<http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/2012/01/12/20120112arizona-school-voucher-push-revived.html>

GOP bills promote aid for school choice

As he has before, Rep. Jack Harper proposed a bill this month that would let voters decide whether to change the Arizona Constitution to permit the use of school vouchers.

The bill would allow many parents to get state vouchers for per-pupil K-12 [funding](#) and use them to pay for their children to attend private schools, including religious ones.

Harper doesn't expect it to pass.

But the West Valley Republican's proposal -- made as an "ideological" statement, he says -- represents the efforts of some conservative leaders to advance school-choice measures that steer public education money to private schools.

Harper's bill is unlikely to get support, even from GOP leaders, he says, because the ballot measure has no [financial](#) backing and similar ones have been rejected by voters in other states, including Utah and California.

But other bills designed to steer more state [funds](#) to private schools do have leaders' support.

Two proposed Senate bills would double the amount residents could save on their state income-tax bills, via credits, by donating to private-school scholarship funds. The bills also would expand the number of students eligible for the scholarships. The bills were passed by the Senate Finance Committee last week.

A third school-choice proposal, in a bill being drafted, would give parents the power to fire a failing district school's principal, shut the district school down or replace it with a charter school. The trend of empowering parents began in Los Angeles and is spreading.

"We see that these bills will be opening up opportunities to ensure as many children as possible can attend the school of their parents' choosing," said Deborah Sheasby, an attorney and lobbyist for the Center for Arizona Policy, which advocates for conservative causes, including school choice. "These bills are winners all around for Arizona families."

The groups and people pushing these bills were among those that helped bring to Arizona privately operated public schools, called charters, as well as creation of the tax-credit scholarships.

Their latest victory, which began this school year, is a law that created a statewide program giving parents of disabled students most of the money the state would spend educating their child. Parents can spend that money on private-school tuition and other education services, such as tutoring and even college-savings plans. The program is up and running at the same time its constitutionality is being challenged in court.

Opponents say school-choice measures can end up weakening district schools and argue that channeling state money to

private schools violates state constitutional bans on spending state funds on religion or on private or religious schools. The opponents, which include district school boards, teachers unions and advocacy groups, argue the state has a constitutional obligation to use public money to improve cash-strapped public schools, not give it to private and religious schools. Instead, the state has cut funds to public schools for three consecutive years while passing laws that provide more state money for private schools, they say.

Arizona parents already have more school choice than many other states, they say. They can send their child to any school within their district or another district. Many districts offer special programs for advanced students and in vocational training, science, math, the arts and languages. If parents can't find something they like in a district, there are also 510 charter schools.

"It's (the school-choice push is) extremely frustrating because there is no Arizona student trapped in a public school," said Janice Palmer, lobbyist for the Arizona School Boards Association. Parents don't need more choices, Palmer said; schools need more parents to take an active interest in education.

Groups such as Palmer's have fewer allies in the Legislature, but voters often come down on the side of public schools. The most recent was the approval of a temporary sales-tax hike to help schools make it through the recession.

A ban on vouchers

A strong, organized movement exists to push the limits of the state prohibition on spending public funds on private schools. The coalition includes well-funded advocacy organizations with lawyers, lobbyists and allies among state lawmakers.

For many school-choice advocates, vouchers for all 1 million public-school students in Arizona is the goal. But court rulings have forced them to work around the edges of the ban.

States have control over the way their public funds are used, said attorney Tim Keller, executive director of the Arizona chapter of the Institute for Justice, a non-profit civil-liberties law firm. "So, if a state's constitution says no public dollars can go to any private school, that's permissible."

In 2009, the Arizona Supreme Court declared school vouchers unconstitutional because of a prohibition in the state's Constitution against using public money to support religious or private schools.

After the decision, Harper introduced a bill to change the state's Constitution to allow vouchers for just disabled students and children living in foster care. But, this year and last, his bill has had a new twist: It would allow a parent to receive a \$5,500 state-funded voucher to pay for private-school tuition if their child attended a public school where the average class size was 35 or more students. Harper said he is being strategic in seeking a repeal of the constitutional language for a targeted group of students.

"I didn't want to go for a blanket repeal because it hasn't passed anywhere in the nation," Harper said.

"We're not going to eliminate public schools. We're not going to cripple public schools. But we want people to have options so public schools know they have to work hard to keep every student."

Even with the narrowed approach, Harper said there is little confidence among lawmakers that Arizona voters are ready to approve vouchers.

Expanding tax credits

School-choice advocates have had their greatest success with the state's private-school tax-credit laws.

The laws allow individual and corporate taxpayers to reduce their tax obligation to the state dollar for dollar by making donations to private-school scholarship funds. The money does not go directly from the state to a private school. To avoid constitutional prohibitions, the law created private non-profit "school-tuition organizations" to collect the money and distribute it as scholarships to students at private and religious schools.

In 2010, the state had 54 school-tuition organizations that collected \$43 million in individual tax credits and \$12 million in corporate tax-credit contributions; they distributed about 31,000 scholarships. Each tuition organization gets to keep 10 percent of the donations to pay for overhead costs.

The Arizona Supreme Court has upheld the tax-credit programs, saying the money is not a direct appropriation from the state. Last year, in a 5-4 ruling, the U.S. Supreme Court agreed, declaring the tax-credit donations as private, not public, money.

That ruling has emboldened the school-choice movement. Two new tax-credit bills, SB 1047 and SB 1048, were introduced this session and were passed by the Senate Finance Committee on Thursday. Such bills are commonly accompanied by a report on their fiscal impact, but the report wasn't completed by the time of the vote.

Among other changes, the bills would double the amount individual taxpayers could contribute and expand the number of students who are eligible for scholarships. They also would eliminate the need for private schools receiving the scholarship money to publish their standardized-test scores and have their teachers and staff fingerprinted.

The current maximum tax credits now are \$503 for singles and \$1,006 for married couples. The donations can go toward scholarships for any K-12 student who applies and for disabled preschool children. The new proposal allows those who already contributed the maximum to donate additional amounts with the same caps. The catch is that tuition organizations must use the money for scholarships for students just starting kindergarten in a private school, a student switching from a public school to a private school, or a child whose parents are on active military duty.

"The opponents of scholarship tax credits would always argue that those students (who received tax-credit scholarships) would all attend a private school anyway," said Sen. Steve Yarborough, R-Chandler, one of the sponsors of the new bills and chair of the Senate Finance Committee.

"That was nonsense, but nevertheless you were helpless to prove conclusively that it was nonsense," said Yarborough, who operates the state's second-largest school-tuition organization. "By having the switcher provision in place, you know those students have to be leaving a public school and going to a private school."

School-tuition organizations already must use corporate tax-credit donations for lower-income K-12 students who are moving from a public to a private school. The new bills expand recipients to disabled preschool children and children from active military families.

Other school-choice efforts

The Goldwater Institute, a Phoenix-based conservative think tank and advocacy group, is helping to draft legislation that would allow a majority of parents whose children go to a failing school to shut it down.

Parents also could replace the principal or turn the school into a charter school.

Parent Revolution, a parent-advocacy group in California, helped pass the first state "parent trigger law," as it's called, in December 2010. Mississippi and Texas have versions, and up to 20 states are considering laws that give parents more power to change district schools.

Last year, parents in Compton, Calif., tried to use the law to force a district school to become a charter school, but the district fought back in court. Parents at another school east of Los Angeles may petition this week under the law to force a district to implement reforms.

"We need something where parents can take ownership of their present, not just their future," said Jonathan Butcher, the Goldwater Institute's education director. The bill would allow parents to take "some pretty aggressive action."

Teachers unions have argued that trigger laws can lead to blaming school leaders and teachers while ignoring the need to provide more resources for low-performing schools. Still, some teachers say they welcome more parent involvement.

Goldwater Institute attorneys also are fighting the legal battle to save the latest school-choice law, which creates Empowerment Scholarship Accounts. The bill was signed into law in April .

Empowerment Scholarship Accounts are offered to the parents of disabled students. They are given a card, like a debit card, containing 90 percent of the amount the state would have given a district or charter school to educate their children. The money given to the parents can be used for educational expenses, including tuition at a private school, textbooks, therapies or tutoring.

"ESAs provide a way for parents to customize their child's education, something that's never happened before," Butcher said. "Now, it's not just about choosing the right school but defining the set of services that will be best for a child."

Opponents of Empowerment Scholarship Accounts say the program violates the same language in the state's Constitution that vouchers would violate. The first hearings on the legal challenge happened right after Thanksgiving in Maricopa County Superior Court, and a ruling is expected at any time.

The state provided 75 students with Empowerment Scholarship Accounts debit cards at the beginning of this school year.

Four parents had to remove themselves from the program and return the funds because they did not understand that the funds were to replace public-school services, not augment them, said Andrew LeFevre, an Arizona Department of Education spokesman. Another round of debit cards will be approved this month.

About 154 parents applied and, currently, 79 of the parents are approved. The average debit card for students approved in the fall for a full year of services was \$13,000, LeFevre reported.

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Judge Upholds Indiana Voucher Law

Education Week

By: Sean Cavanagh

January 17, 2012

http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/state_edwatch/2012/01/post_16.html

An Indiana judge [has upheld](#) the state's ambitious new voucher law, saying it meets the standards of the state's constitution, despite objections about it directing money to religious schools.

Superior Court Judge Michael Keele found that whether students choose to use public money to attend sectarian institutions is ultimately "immaterial," because families are exercising their choice to do so.

Court decisions over state voucher programs typically turn on the language of individual state constitutions, and the extent to which they restrict the flow of public funds to religious and other non-public institutions, such as schools.

The Indiana case has drawn broad interest both from supporters and opponents of private school choice, in large part because of the large-scale nature of Indiana's program.

While many voucher programs limit eligibility to students of low-incomes, or those with special needs, Indiana's measure, which was supported by the state's GOP-controlled legislature and signed into law by [Republican Gov. Mitch Daniels](#), took the unusual step of setting relatively loose restrictions on eligibility, allowing some students from middle-income families to take part. The measure was one of [several voucher programs](#) created or expanded in states last year. Backers of vouchers say they expect a lot of activity [on that same front](#) in statehouses in 2012.

A lawsuit challenging Indiana's program was filed last year by a group of parents, teachers' union members, and other state residents. They argued that it violated various pieces of Indiana's constitution, in part because it allows students to attend religious schools on the public dime.

But in his ruling, issued January 13, Judge Keele found that "the precise degree of religiosity of schools participating in the [voucher program] has no bearing on the program's constitutionality."

The Indianapolis judge examined the drafting of Indiana's state constitution and the history of education funding in the state, and found that they do not restrict the flow of public money to private schools under all circumstances.

Indiana laws are not about "restricting the government's use of general tax revenues" but rather "protecting citizens from forced tithing or other, similiar government coerced, direct, individual support for churches or ministries," Keele found.

Stay tuned for whether opponents of the law seek decide to continue to fight the case, despite losing this round.

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Proposal seeks to ban Missouri teacher tenure

Associated Press

By: Staff

January 17, 2012

<http://www.kansascity.com/2012/01/17/3375545/proposal-seeks-to-ban-missouri.html>

JEFFERSON CITY A proposed state constitutional amendment would bar tenure for Missouri's school teachers.

The proposed initiative petition was filed Tuesday with the secretary of state's office. It could appear before voters in November if supporters gather between 147,000 and 160,000 signatures from supporters.

Under the measure, school districts that receive state funding or local tax revenue could not enter into more than 3-year contracts with teachers. Schools would be barred from receiving public funding if seniority plays any role in determining whether to fire or promote teachers.

In addition, every school district would be required to use local performance standards for salary and hiring and firing decisions. Most of the local standards would need to be based upon student performance that is measured with objective criteria.

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