

Louisiana Federation of Teachers

Weekly Legislative

Digest

May 25, 2018

Larry Carter, President * Les Landon, Editor

2018 Second Extraordinary Session

Now available on the Web at <http://la.aft.org>

Gov. Edwards: Let's find solutions the people deserve

Gearing up for a contentious special legislative session, Governor John Bel Edwards urged lawmakers to set aside partisanship and “put in place the solutions the people of Louisiana deserve.”

Parting with tradition, Gov. Edwards made his opening remarks for the special session at the University of Louisiana in Lafayette instead of the capitol, saying that, “It is important for elected officials to get outside of that place as often as we can and interact with the people directly affected by the decisions we make.”

The governor said that he vetoed the budget approved last week because the versions that came out of the House and Senate were wildly different, and did nothing to resolve the fiscal cliff facing the state on July 1.

“In my opinion,” he said, “and the opinion of many members – both Republicans and Democrats – that budget proposal was not worthy of the people of Louisiana. Simply put – the cuts were too deep, too wide, too catastrophic.”

When the fiscal year ends on June 30, he said, \$1.4 billion in temporary revenues will fall off the books. A shortfall of \$648 million is expected, meaning that all of the \$1.4 billion does not have to be replaced.

If lawmakers can just raise the \$648 million, he said, it “will allow us to adequately fund all of our critical priorities and result in a net tax cut of \$400 million for the people of Louisiana.”

Failure to meet that goal would make it impossible “to fully fund our partner hospitals, our medical schools, TOPS and Go Grants, corrections and law enforcement, the National Guard, higher education, the department of agriculture and our state parks,” he said.

[To read the governor's complete remarks, click here.](#)

LFT survey: educators want salary action

Large majorities of Louisiana public school teachers favor some type of action to convince the state legislature and local school boards that pay raises are needed, according to a survey of nearly 4,000 teachers released by the Louisiana Federation of Teachers.

“Our survey shows that teachers are fed up, not just with low pay, but also with a lack of resources, crumbling facilities, poor student discipline, and a lack of parental involvement,” LFT President Larry Carter said.

Some 3,832 teachers from 73 Local Education Agencies responded to the survey, taken between April 10 and May 7, Carter said.

“What we learned is that teachers want action, and soon, in a state that has frozen education funding in nine of the last 10 years, and in which the average teacher salary has actually declined,” Carter said.

When asked “Which of these steps are you willing to take to win significant pay raises,” 61% answered “Statewide walkout/strike,” and 59% said “Mass demonstration at state capitol in Baton Rouge.”

[Click here to read more.](#)

Money panel acts on some tax bills

A bill touted as a compromise by its author would extend part of the expiring sales taxes and allow sales taxes to be collected on some previously exempt items.

HB 27 by Rep. Lance Harris (R-Alexandria) would raise about \$370 million. Rep. Harris said he believes the rest of the \$648 million could be offset by budget cuts. Other efforts to raise revenues would face a tough road to 70 votes in the House, he said.

The Ways and Means Committee also approved three bills backed by Democrats aimed at chipping away at the shortfall.

Rep. Katrina Jackson (D-Monroe) introduced HB 13, 18, and 19 would have made permanent some temporary reductions to tax deductions, rebates, and credits. The panel amended the bills to extend the changes for five years.

Lawmaker defers bill that would raise education spending

Faced with overwhelming opposition from the Republican-dominated House Ways and Means Committee, Rep. Ted James (D-Baton Rouge) voluntarily deferred a bill that would have dedicated part of a state sales tax to education issues, including a pay raise for teachers.

HB 23 would have made 0.75% of a one-cent sales tax set to expire on June 30 permanent. It would have funded \$100 million for teacher raises through the MFP, \$230 million for TOPS, and \$50 million each for the Early Childhood Education Fund and Go Grants.