

Association of Texas Professional Educators

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Supporting Your Freedom to TeachSM

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“Mandate relief” bill brings no relief to teachers, schools

AUSTIN—Senate Bill 8, a comprehensive “mandate relief” bill that adds numerous amendments that will do long-term damage to public education, passed today in the Texas House of Representatives. The House piled on several floor amendments to SB 8—many of which will further hurt educators at a time when they are already facing layoffs as well as the likelihood of furloughs and pay cuts.

“The Legislature was called into a special session to consider legislation needed to implement the budget and allow school districts to operate more efficiently,” said Jennifer Canaday, governmental relations manager for the Association of Texas Professional Educators (ATPE). “Members of the House have gone far beyond their charge today adding provisions to SB 8 that have nothing to do with efficiency or implementation of the budget.”

SB 8 will water down teachers’ contract rights, decrease access to independent hearing processes and make it easier for districts to fire teachers in the middle of the school year, disrupting instruction and leaving teachers struggling to find work elsewhere.

“Senate Bill 8 will burden districts with complicated mandates on how they should operate their schools and is likely to open the door to costly litigation over vague new statutes created by the bill,” Canaday said.

Earlier this week, House Public Education committee chair Rep. Rob Eissler (R-The Woodlands) voted SB 8 out of committee without allowing any opportunity for public testimony.

“How can legislators who voted for SB 8 continue to argue that they support public education and believe that having quality educators in the classroom is of the utmost importance?” said ATPE lobbyist Josh Sanderson. “The fact is that these very same people are those voting -- through SB 8 -- to place the burden of balancing an underfunded state education budget on the backs of teachers and ultimately students and parents. Those who voted for SB 8 voted to devalue the education profession and to place even more of a burden on classroom teachers.”

Under SB 8, Texas will continue to struggle with influencing its best and brightest to enter the teaching profession, Canaday said. “ATPE fears that today’s actions, combined with the Legislature’s decision to slash funding for public schools and wholly ignore the

inevitable costs of enrollment growth, will only make the education profession less attractive and encourage our excellent veteran educators to leave the classroom.”

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The 116,000-member Association of Texas Professional Educators is the largest educators' group in Texas and the largest nonunion educators' group nationwide. Its membership consists of classroom teachers, para-educators, administrators, college students and retired educators. ATPE is committed to advocating for better benefits for all educators, promoting a collaborative work environment and the right of educators to choose the association they feel represents their interests, and providing the best education possible for all Texas school children.