



AFT-WV 2024 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

Attracting and Retaining High-Quality Educators and Support Staff for all Students

AFT-WV supports increasing teacher and support staff funding and asks the West Virginia Legislature to provide appropriate funding for a 3-year salary increase package; a \$7,000 raise across the board for teachers, service personnel, and public employees with an automatic cost of living increases.

Teacher retainment initiatives and incentives

Many educators are leaving the profession long before planned because their work conditions do not contribute to their success, leaving them frustrated and exhausted. These vacancies lead to chronic staffing shortages, and the unresolved conditions in our schools further stress our education systems. Additionally, it becomes more challenging for those who remain in the profession to serve students and their communities. AFT-WV proposes the following measures to help retain education employees and improve longevity in the profession:

- Restructuring schools to create positive working and learning conditions for all
- Giving educators the time, tools, trust, and training to succeed
- Providing sustainable and commensurate compensation and benefits

Improving Salary and Benefits for Retirees

AFT-WV supports providing regular cost-of-living increases for all retired public employees, removing all restrictions on the daily rate of pay for all retired teachers and retired service personnel who serve as substitutes, and eliminating state taxes for retired educators, retired service personnel, and retired public employees.

School and Employee Safety

As school discipline and safety continue to be at the top of employee concerns, AFT-WV seeks ways to strengthen the current provisions and improve enforcement mechanisms within the West Virginia Safe Schools Act.

Additionally, in light of the growing incidence of physical harm inflicted on school employees by students (most notably special education aides), AFT-WV recommends improved training and protocols to protect employees from physical harm.

Student/Teacher ratio

While AFT-WV applauds the efforts of the West Virginia Legislature in passing HB 3035, we believe that adding secondary grade levels to existing student-teacher ratio laws would significantly contribute to student success. AFT-WV asks that ARTICLE 5. COUNTY BOARDS OF EDUCATION be amended to read as follows to include secondary levels in class size limits:

18-5-18a – (3) For grades four, five, and six, not more than 25 pupils for each teacher; and for grades seven through twelve, not more than 30.

AFT-WV supports the reintroduction and passage of the following bills from the 2023

Legislative Session that did not complete the legislative process:

- Due to the current teacher and substitute shortage, there has been discussion of incentivizing employee leave time to encourage employees to not take their days off. However, current incentive programs in place lack significant value to encourage employees to forgo their leave time.
Therefore, AFT-WV supports the reintroduction of SB638 by **Senators Grady, Swope, Rucker, Jeffries, Clements, Plymale, and Maroney** with the caveat that any incentive for unused personal days must be meaningful and valuable for employees in order to succeed.
- **HB 3548 (By Delegates Clark, Ferrell, Longanacre, Hanna, Maynor, Jennings, Hite, Walker, Ellington, and Toney)** requires state board rules providing uniform procedure, prohibition, form, and benefit regarding a teacher's voluntary exchange of duty-free lunch recess to perform duties at the school. HB 3548 was passed by the House of Delegates.
- **HB 3549 (By Delegates Clark, Statler, Ferrell, Longanacre, Hanna, Jennings, Hornby, Hite, Walker, Ellington, and Toney)** prohibits regular classroom teachers and special education classroom teachers who are required to participate in an individualized education program committee from also being required to prepare or reduce to writing the individualized education

program plan unless no other professional educator with the knowledge is available. HB3549 was passed by the House of Delegates.

- **HB 3098 (By Delegates Ellington, Statler, Toney, Clark, and Hornby)** eliminates the WV General Summative Assessment and replaces it with a formative assessment given three times a year. HB3098 was passed by the House of Delegates.
- **SB 264 (By Senators Weld, Hamilton, Woelfel, Jeffries, Deeds, Karnes, Chapman, Hunt, Oliverio, and Plymale)** prohibits persons who have been convicted of certain crimes against minors from holding positions on boards of education. SB 264 was passed by the Senate.
- **SB 41 (By Senators Clements, Grady, and Queen)** establishes minimum student enrollment for the school aid formula. This bill would affect only three counties: Calhoun, Gilmer, and Wirt. These counties currently have a net enrollment of under 1200 students and this bill would ease the financial hardship posed by small student enrollment and assist the counties in providing adequate student services. SB 41 passed the Senate Education Committee and was never considered by the Senate Finance Committee.