

Lujan Grisham enacts historic raises for NM teachers

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SANTA FE – Gov. Michelle Lujan Grisham was joined by educators, students and legislators as she signed multiple pieces of priority legislation into law strengthening the state’s educator pipeline and building up New Mexico’s public education system for students, families and education professionals March 1.

THE HEADLINERS

Senate Bill 1, which increases the minimum salaries by \$10,000 for all three tiers of teachers. Coupled with 7 percent raises in the budget, New Mexico teachers will be the highest paid in the region. (Sponsors: Sen. Mimi Stewart, Sen. Siah Correa Hemphill, Rep. Debra Sariñana)

House Bill 73 shortens the amount of time teachers must wait to return to the classroom to work after retirement, helping to address the state’s teacher shortage. (Sponsors: Rep. Joy Garratt, Rep. Phelps Anderson, Rep. Ryan Lane)

House Bill 13, which increases the stipend for resident teachers, provides stipends for mentor teachers involved in the state’s teacher residency program and requires teachers who go through the program to work in the same district for three years – providing a more stable base of educators in rural areas. (Sponsors: Rep. Debra Sariñana, Rep. Joy Garratt, Sen. William Soules, Sen. Mimi Stewart, Rep. Ryan Lane)

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Senate Bill 36 increases employer contributions to the educational retirement fund, ensuring the fund remains solvent and decreases teacher contributions, allowing teachers to take more money home. (Sponsors: Sen. Mimi Stewart, Rep. Natalie Figueroa)

“New Mexico cannot fully realize a cradle-to-career educational system that lifts up every student and family without supporting our educators,” Lujan Grisham said. “This session, we made enormous strides in demonstrating that we are a state that respects and values these professionals who make a difference in the lives of our children every single day. This is an excellent place to build from, and we will continue to use every avenue to build up New Mexico schools, students, families and teachers.”

Gallup-McKinley County Schools Superintendent Mike Hyatt lauded the governor for signing off on the bills, and called it a step in the right direction in resolving some ongoing litigation.

“The Gallup-McKinley County Schools Board of Education changed the educational landscape in New Mexico as a plaintiff in the on-going Yazzie-Martinez litigation,” Hyatt said. “GMCS has consistently advocated for additional funding for students who are at risk and sounded the alarm about the lack of educational funding in New Mexico.”

Hyatt emphasized that GMCS students and staff deserve to be treated fairly and he looks forward to implementing these salary increases to recruit and retain highly qualified staff at GMCS.

“GMCS celebrates the signing of Senate Bill 1 from the recent legislative session, which is an on-going move in the right direction to resolve this ongoing litigation.”

According to New Mexico Center on Law and Poverty, in July 2018, a state district court ruled in the consolidated *Yazzie/Martinez v. State of New Mexico* lawsuit that the state is violating the constitutional rights of students and has not adequately invested in public education nor adopted the educational instruction and programs.

Meanwhile, Public Education Secretary Kurt Steinhaus said the bills the governor signed March

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1 sends a loud, clear message that New Mexico values and supports professional educators.

“We are fortunate to have an executive and a Legislature that are willing to invest in this precious resource because they understand how vital great teachers are to student academic achievement and well-being,” he said.

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ED-FRIENDLY BILLS PASSED

House Bill 57, which allows PED to use data reported in FY20 instead of FY22 to calculate the transportation distributions for FY23. This is a one-time fix to hold the transportation formula harmless due to the pandemic.

HB 119, which provides for an additional state distribution for school districts levying the Public School Capital Improvements Tax.

HB 43, which authorizes the New Mexico Finance Authority to make loans to charter schools for renovation, construction, purchase or expansion of a charter school facility or to pay off charter school lease-purchase agreements through a new Charter School Facility Revolving Fund.