

LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE REPORT



After an initial 2022-23 committee meeting Nov. 17, 2022, and four subcommittee meetings in March and April, the ATPE Legislative Committee met April 24, 2023, via Zoom to consider and adopt recommendations for the 2023-24 ATPE Legislative Program. In attendance were

Chair Abigail Ramford, Lamesa, and committee members Jesus Garza, La Joya; Rose Perez, Corpus Christi; Sean Douglas, Cuero; Gayle Sampley, Humble; Kim Dolese, North East Texas; Dale Lovett, Olney; Melanie Willett, Plano; David Williams, Keller; Nattina Wilkerson, At-Large; Jennifer Bowland, Leander; Luz Mendez, Junction; Karen Hill, Pecos; Sarah Mayne, El Paso; and Phyllis Jarzombek, Falls City. Also in attendance were ATPE State President Stacey Ward and State Treasurer Jerrica Liggins, as well as ATPE staff members Tricia Cave, Monty Exter, Jennifer Mitchell, and Mark Wiggins.

The chair called the meeting to order at 6:32 p.m. and gave introductory remarks before turning the program over to ATPE Governmental Relations Director Monty Exter, who reviewed the committee charge. Each subcommittee chair then presented their group's recommendations. Positions amended during the subcommittee process were pulled for discussion. Positions not amended by a subcommittee were voted on in blocks unless requested to be pulled for separate consideration.

Subcommittee One, Educator Rights, was charged with considering Positions No. 4, 13, 21, 22, 26, 31, 32, 36, 38, and 39. As shown below, the Legislative Committee voted to recommend re adoption without amendment of Positions No. 22, 31, 32, 36, and 38. Positions No. 4, 13, 21, 26, and 39 were discussed separately prior to being recommended for re adoption as amended.

Subcommittee Two, Classroom, was charged with considering Positions No. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, and 37. As shown below, the Legislative Committee voted to recommend re adoption without amendment of Positions No. 8, 10, 11, 12, 15, 18, and 37. Position Nos. 7 and 8 were discussed separately prior to being recommended for re adoption as amended.

Subcommittee Three, Funding and Compensation, was charged with considering Positions No. 1, 19, 20, 23, 24, 25, 27, 28, 29, and 30. As shown below, the Legislative Committee voted to recommend re adoption without amendment of Positions No. 1, 19, 24, 25, 27, and 30. Positions No. 20, 23, 28, and 29 were discussed separately prior to being recommended for re adoption as amended.

Subcommittee Four, Regulation and Structure, was charged with considering Positions No. 2, 3, 5, 6, 14, 16, 17, 33, 34, and 35. As shown below, the Legislative Committee voted to recommend re adoption without amendment of Positions No. 2, 3, 5, 6, 17, 33, 34, and 35. Positions No. 14 and 16 were discussed separately prior to being recommended for re adoption as amended.

After voting on all positions, the committee voted to give its chair

authority to approve the final committee report for presentation to the ATPE Board of Directors and House of Delegates.

The meeting adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Abigail Ramford, Chair

(1) Educator recruitment and retention

ATPE supports mandatory state-funded and research-based mentoring programs for beginning educators. ATPE recommends that the state compensate mentors and give them sufficient training and resources to be successful. ATPE supports efforts to match beginning educators with the most suitable mentors for their unique needs. ATPE recommends that the state fund programs to reduce the financial burden on educators pursuing certification and to recruit and retain educators in shortage areas.

ATPE recommends that the state provide a plan for full vesting upon retirement for health insurance benefits as an incentive to retain experienced educators.

ATPE supports a state-funded buyback or reimbursement plan for accumulated state personal leave.

ATPE supports providing an increase in the Teacher Retirement System (TRS) multiplier for educators who remain in the profession beyond their eligibility for full retirement.

ATPE supports improving educator compensation as a tool for recruitment and retention.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(2) Collaborative working environment

ATPE supports a governance structure for schools that encourages a collaborative working environment between educators and local school board members.

ATPE recommends that districts/the state:

- Establish ethics standards for all local school board members.
- Require full public notification when a local district considers or requests waivers.
- Strengthen the site-based decision-making (SBDM) process to ensure that state SBDM laws are effectively implemented.

Such measures should:

- Hold all participants accountable for their roles and responsibilities, including timely release of school board communications.
- Support majority representation by certified teachers on SBDM committees.
- Establish an appeals process to the local school board.

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COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(3) Collective bargaining

ATPE supports Texas' remaining a right-to-work state.

ATPE opposes collective bargaining and the exclusive representation of employees being granted to only one employee organization in a school district.

ATPE supports the adoption of inclusive consultation policies by local school districts.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(4) Certification and assignment

ATPE supports a state certification process that ensures educators are appropriately trained and certified exclusively by the state.

ATPE supports allowing for an appeal of any decision that would deny educator certification to a qualified individual.

ATPE recommends that the state:

- a. Standardize Promote high-quality teacher preparation programs to that include policies and practices designed to ensure that new teachers receive adequate mentoring and support and the training they need to successfully enter the teaching profession.
- b. Increase the standards for entrance into the profession, and provide adequate mentoring and educator candidate support.
- c. Require comprehensive pedagogical training, including classroom and discipline management, child and adolescent psychology, and methods courses.
- d. Require coursework in the areas of reading, special education, gifted/talented, ESL, and computer literacy.
- e. To the extent practicable, limit the assignment of temporarily certified and uncertified staff as a teacher of record.
- f. Require administrators to have at least five years of relevant classroom teaching experience.
- g. Require initial administrator certification and assignments to correlate with teaching experience to the extent possible, such as considerations in grade band experience.
- h. Require districts to assign teachers to virtual, in-person, or hybrid instructional settings in a manner that respects the choice of the teacher, the teacher's certification, the need for safety, and the optimum learning environment for the students.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: Subcommittees One and Four requested that staff draft proposed language on supporting high-quality educator prepara-

tion programs and the appropriate limited use of temporary certification. The committee agreed with the language brought forward.

(5) State Board for Educator Certification (SBEC)

ATPE supports the maintenance of a separate, independent state board that allows educators to govern their own profession and enforce the Educator Code of Ethics.

ATPE recommends that a majority of the board's voting members be public educators elected by the profession. The board should reflect the diversity of the profession.

ATPE recommends public school employees not be held responsible for the cost of criminal background checks and that appropriate safeguards be maintained to protect the confidentiality of results.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(6) State Board of Education (SBOE)

ATPE opposes any legislation that would make the entire board subject to appointment by the governor.

ATPE supports legislation to allow board members to elect their own chairman and to require that the chairman have a background in public education, preferably as a certified educator.

ATPE recommends that all board members have public education experience.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(7) Safe schools

ATPE supports measures to ensure all educational settings are safe and secure environments where students, school employees, and volunteers can be productive.

ATPE recommends that school districts/the state:

- a. Make personnel standards and curriculum for all disciplinary alternative education programs commensurate with public education requirements.
- b. Immediately remove any student who threatens or physically assaults a school employee, a volunteer, or another student to an alternate placement as determined by district policy and in accordance with state and federal law. The student's parent or guardian should be notified immediately.
- c. Utilize resources to identify, deter, and/or recover students from human trafficking, gang involvement, and/or substance abuse.
- d. Require accurate coding and reporting of incidents at schools.

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- e. Require comprehensive training for all staff in Chapter 37 (relating to student discipline) as well as annual notification of and/or updates on campus-level procedures regarding compliance with Chapter 37 of the Texas Education Code.
- f. Require suicide prevention training and coping assistance for all school personnel.
- g. Require schools to develop local policies regarding age-appropriate active shooter training for staff and students.
- h. Ensure students have adequate access to trained and certified school nurses, counselors, and mental health resources.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: Committee members recognized the increase in active shooter drills due to the incidence of school shootings and wanted ATPE to support efforts to ensure the drills are executed in an age-appropriate manner. They also discussed the importance of access to nurses, counselors, and mental health resources as an important aspect of school safety and violence/suicide prevention. With human trafficking unfortunately on the rise in recent years, the committee felt it was appropriate to add human trafficking as another area in which educators should receive training to identify victims.

(8) Class size

ATPE supports reduced class sizes and caseload limitations that are mandated and enforced by the state for all grade levels and instructional settings to allow for optimal learning environments.

ATPE recommends that the state limit class-size waivers and require full public disclosure of requests for class-size waivers.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(9) Curriculum

ATPE supports comprehensive instruction in all grade levels that prepares Texas students for success throughout their public school years as well as in post-secondary and career opportunities.

ATPE recommends that school districts/the state:

- a. Ensure that state curriculum standards are developmentally appropriate for all grade levels and content areas.
- b. Allow teachers and administrators to determine the appropriate content and/or methodology of curriculum and education programs, including e-learning programs.
- c. Require one year of mandatory attendance in an accredited kindergarten program in order for students to be eligible to enter first grade.
- d. Require that children entering kindergarten should be 5 years old on or before July 1.

- e. Expand and equitably fund career and technology programs.
- f. Provide all students with adequately trained personnel and the most appropriate placement to meet their needs.
- g. Recommend that any changes to graduation requirements be made with full consideration of the need for a well-rounded curriculum and student choice.
- h. Ensure that the State Board of Education incorporates educator input whenever the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills or graduation requirements are revised.
- i. Make curriculum for all alternative education programs commensurate with public education requirements.
- j. Provide current instructional materials in sufficient quantities to teachers and students.
- k. Ensure that teachers have timely access to training in the use of new instructional materials.
- l. Ensure that state curriculum standards support the social, emotional, personal, and academic growth of students.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: The committee discussed that training on new instructional materials often does not occur in advance but instead after the school year in which use of the materials has already begun.

(10) Grading policies

ATPE opposes policies and practices that do not give deference to an educator's professional discretion in assessing the progress of their students.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(11) Testing

ATPE supports a testing and accountability system developed with educator input that maximizes student learning and helps educators meet the individual needs of students.

ATPE opposes the use of high-stakes tests as the sole measure of student achievement.

ATPE recommends that the state:

- a. Provide all manipulative instruments and necessities mandatory for the completion of statewide assessments at the beginning of each school year.
- b. Allow appropriate modifications and/or accommodations on statewide assessments for English Language Learners (ELLs), special education students, and students served by Section 504.
- c. Support state and locally developed alternative assessment instruments provided that teachers are afforded additional and adequate resources to undertake assessment development.

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- d. Ensure that any online testing for state assessments is fully funded by the state, is tested and operational for each school district, and allows appropriate modifications and/or accommodations for students.
- e. Support a set schedule for releasing all implemented state-required assessments.
- f. Allow for flexibility in determining when ELLs are required to be assessed in English.
- g. Not require state-developed end-of-course exams to be included in a course grade.
- h. Reduce the amount of mandated tests at all school levels.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(12) Accountability

ATPE recommends that curriculum remain in local control and opposes a standardized national curriculum and test being mandated.

ATPE recommends that all federal mandates be fully funded by the federal government.

ATPE recommends that accountability laws be designed to allow for educators to meet the needs of individual students.

ATPE recommends that the state's accountability and data systems, including any growth models, be based on statistically valid principles.

ATPE supports measures to ensure that persons involved in any way in the implementation and administration of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) make full disclosure of conflicts of interest and that all financial transactions related to the implementation and administration of ESEA be transparent.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(13) Professional development

ATPE supports quality professional development programs for all school district personnel. Programs should ~~meet the standards in the Professional Development Imperative (PDI)~~, be offered at no cost, and be made easily accessible.

ATPE recommends that school districts/the state:

- a. Require site-based decision-making (SBDM) committees to determine how staff development days are used in accordance with campus needs.
- b. Offer comprehensive staff development in areas including but not limited to special education, school law, ~~technology~~, gifted/talented education, English as a Second Language (ESL), crisis management, discipline, school safety, and cultural awareness.

- c. Accept and approve all State Board for Educator Certification (SBECE)-approved professional development for credit by all school districts.
- d. Foster the development of interactive professional development learning communities.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: The reference to the Professional Development Imperative was removed as out of date. The committee felt "technology" did not fit in with the rest of the enumerated list, though it could still be supported because the list is inclusive but not limited. Similarly, the committee felt English as a Second Language or serving English Language Learners should be an enumerated example.

(14) Home schooling and private schooling

ATPE opposes any voucher program or initiative, including a tuition tax credit, education savings account, or voucher system any other such program, that would direct public funds to private, home, or for-profit virtual schools.

~~ATPE opposes the selective participation of home-school and private school students in public school activities and classes, except through the Virtual School Network.~~

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: The committee discussed the current push for vouchers and added a reference to education savings accounts (ESAs). At the same time, the committee wanted to reorganize the sentence to make clear that while proposals may pop up using various names, such as ESAs, tuition tax credit, or parent empowerment grant, they are all vouchers. The second sentence in this statement was removed because legislation was passed in a prior session that allows home-school students access to extracurricular classes. The committee did feel it was proper for ATPE to monitor the outcome of this legislation and potentially consider readopting a position on the issue in the future if warranted.

(15) University Interscholastic League

ATPE opposes any legislation that would abolish the UIL or require it to open its membership to all private and home schools.

ATPE opposes any legislation that would eliminate the athletic period from the school day or abolish "No Pass, No Play" standards.

ATPE opposes legislation that would permit schools to employ coaches who are not full-time employees of the district.

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ATPE opposes legislation that would allow parents to perform eligibility checks.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(16) Charter schools

ATPE recommends that laws regulating charter and traditional public schools be drafted to encourage both systems to coexist in an efficient manner and that charter laws not increase fiscal, academic, or other burdens on traditional public schools.

ATPE recommends that the state adhere to a rigorous authorization process when granting charters.

ATPE recommends that the state require charter schools to meet appropriate financial accountability and academic performance standards before allowing them to continue or expand.

ATPE supports employees of charter schools having applicable certification requirements, standards, rights, and benefits commensurate with employees of traditional public schools.

ATPE recommends that charter governing board members receive training commensurate with training required for public school board members.

ATPE recommends that the UIL, legislature, commissioner of education, and State Board of Education prevent unfair recruitment by charter schools.

ATPE recommends that the Texas Education Agency prohibit charter schools from creating exclusionary expulsion or enrollment policies.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: Subcommittee Four requested that ATPE Governmental Relations staff bring forward language aimed at supporting the concept that charter school laws should not hurt traditional public schools and should encourage charter schools and traditional public schools to coexist efficiently. The committee agreed with the language brought forward.

(17) Windham School District and Texas Juvenile Justice Department

ATPE supports the goals established for the Windham School District (WSD) and the Texas Juvenile Justice Department (TJJD). Educators employed by those entities should have certification requirements, standards, rights, and benefits commensurate with other public school district educators. ATPE supports the inclusion of WSD and TJJD teachers' input before any legislative changes are made that affect these school systems.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(18) Parental, business, and community involvement

ATPE supports programs that encourage parental, business, and community involvement in the education of all students.

ATPE recommends that the state encourage employers, including school districts, to provide release time for parents to participate in school/parental involvement activities.

ATPE recommends that all Texas legislators, especially those serving on committees dealing with educational issues, spend time each year in classrooms in school districts of varying sizes and socioeconomic backgrounds throughout the state in order to gain firsthand knowledge of the inner workings of Texas public schools.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(19) Texas public education system

ATPE supports a public education funding system that is equitable and adequate to provide every student an equal opportunity to receive an exemplary public education. ATPE also supports any form of state revenue enhancement and tax restructuring that accomplishes this goal.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(20) Permanent School Fund

ATPE supports a management strategy that provides transparency and maintains the security and growth of the Permanent School Fund while maintaining the integrity of the distribution method applied to the Available School Fund.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: The committee discussed recent changes to the structure of Permanent School Fund oversight and wanted to ensure the new governance structure continued to provide transparency.

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(21) Contracts and due process

ATPE supports vigorous enforcement of equitable educator contract laws and due process laws regarding teacher assignment, transfer, hiring, and dismissal, including requirements for independent hearing examiners.

ATPE supports having optimal grievance policies and processes at campus, school district, and state levels.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: The committee expressed a desire for the ATPE Legislative Program to contain a broad statement on grievance policies that encompasses the campus, district, and state agency levels, thus allowing ATPE to take positions on applicable bills.

(22) Paraprofessionals

ATPE supports a state minimum salary schedule for all paraprofessionals employed by the school district as well as duty-free lunches, due process, basic notification, and reasons for employment termination considerations.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(23) Compensation and benefits package

ATPE believes that education is a profession and that educational professionals should be compensated in a manner that reflects the professional nature of the field.

ATPE supports a career compensation and benefits package for all certified, licensed, and contracted public school employees that mandates competitive salaries that are equal to or greater than the national average and competitive with private industry. The state program should include a minimum salary schedule that provides for annual regular increases over the entirety of an educator's career to recognize longevity in the profession.

ATPE supports full state funding for compensation and benefit increases that districts are required to pass on to individual educators in the exact amount funded without any loss of local supplement.

ATPE recommends that the state prohibit districts from substantially reducing an employee's effective rate of pay through the imposition of additional duties outside the classroom or extension of the school day, week, or year.

The state should prohibit school districts from making changes to local policy after the deadline for resignation, if those changes would reduce educators' compensation or benefits.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: The committee discussed legislation at the time of its meeting, such as House Bill (HB) 100, that contains potential changes to the minimum salary schedule. Committee members expressed concern with legislative proposals that would include only three steps in a schedule that tops out after 10 years. Although the committee believed substantial salary increases might be a reasonable tradeoff for an annual step structure, increases would still need to occur on a regular basis. Perhaps most importantly, the committee felt educators should be able to expect salary increases for the duration of their careers.

(24) Differentiated pay

In addition to minimum salaries, ATPE supports differentiated pay in the form of step increases or stipends for public educators who undertake advanced certification/training, advanced coursework or degrees, or other professional duties that they are required to perform outside normal instructional activities.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(25) Performance-based decisions

ATPE opposes the use of student performance, including test scores as the primary measure of a teacher's effectiveness, as the determining factor for a teacher's compensation or as the primary rationale for an adverse employment action.

ATPE believes students' state-level standardized test scores should not be a component of teacher evaluations until such time as they can be validated through a consensus of independent research and peer review for that purpose.

ATPE opposes the use of value-added measurement at the individual teacher level for teacher evaluation purposes or decisions about continued employment of teachers.

ATPE supports incorporating measures of student growth at the campus level or higher into evaluations of educators as long as the measures are developed with educator input, piloted, and deemed statistically reliable.

ATPE opposes incentive or performance pay programs unless they are designed in an equitable and fair manner as determined by educators on a campus basis.

ATPE supports the creation of a statewide set of evaluation standards for campus administrators that includes a survey of campus classroom educators and staff regarding the professional performance of the campus administrators.

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COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(26) Leave policies

ATPE supports state standards that establish fair and equitable leave policies that respect the discretion of education professionals.

ATPE recommends that the state:

- a. Grant full employment benefits to employees who are physically injured by students until such time as the employees return to work or, if necessary, throughout their retirement.
- b. Increase the number of state personal days to 10 per year.
- c. Grant full daily pay to employees who have been subpoenaed or called for jury duty.
- d. Require that district policies cannot set a maximum number of consecutive days taken at less than five days.
- e. Discourage districts from taking adverse actions against an educator on the basis of reasonable use of accrued leave.
- f. Ensure that educators have access to adequate leave options to address their mental health and well-being.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: The committee discussed the importance of adequate leave options as a deterrent to the current teacher shortage and particularly wanted to support additional language regarding leave for mental health issues and jury duty, as well as a desire that educators generally be treated as professionals in their ability to use earned leave time.

(27) Health insurance

ATPE supports providing public school employees with high-quality, competitive health insurance benefits that are fully funded by the state at a level equal to or greater than the benefits provided to state employees.

ATPE supports efforts to ensure all public school employees have affordable health insurance and access to high-quality care.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(28) Teacher Retirement System

ATPE supports the dedication of all available revenue to maintain the actuarial soundness of the pension fund in order to improve

benefits for all active and retired Teacher Retirement System (TRS) members.

In addition, ATPE supports an increased state contribution rate, an increase of the retirement formula multiplier, ~~the establishment of TRS benefits comparable to state employee retirement benefits,~~ and continued control of TRS funds at the state level.

ATPE recommends that the state:

- a. Provide for one year of state-paid retirement credit for every 50 days of unused, accumulated state leave.
- b. Require that a majority of TRS board members be educators.
- c. Maintain the Rule of 80 formula for retirement eligibility without penalties for early-age retirement.
- d. Provide an annual cost-of-living increase for retired educators.
- e. Maintain the current defined benefit pension plan for all TRS members.
- f. Give TRS contributions the same weight as Social Security contributions for the purpose of calculating child support payments.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: The language about state benefits was struck in recognition of the fact that the Employees Retirement System (ERS) is longer a defined-benefit pension system for new employees and thus does not offer an adequate system comparison.

(29) Social Security

ATPE supports the amendment of federal law/rules to eliminate provisions that reduce retirement benefits of educators.

~~ATPE opposes mandatory participation in Social Security for employees of public school districts in Texas.~~

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: The committee wanted to ensure that ATPE could focus its efforts with regard to Social Security issues exclusively on the Windfall Elimination Provision and Government Pension Offset without creating any potential barriers or distractions to accomplishing that goal.

(30) Tax credits

ATPE supports permanent tax credits and equitable reimbursement programs for materials and items purchased by educators for use in classrooms or other education-job-related purposes.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

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(31) Payroll deduction

ATPE supports state standards that establish fair and equitable payroll deduction policies.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(32) Paperwork reduction

ATPE supports meaningful efforts to monitor and control the paperwork burdens on educators, including paraprofessionals.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(33) Regulatory exemptions, including Districts of Innovation

ATPE generally opposes the state granting waivers or exempting districts and campuses from provisions of the Education Code and believes that any exemptions granted should be as narrow and time-limited as possible.

ATPE believes districts should not be allowed to use exemptions in a manner that is inconsistent with the district's written and adopted DOI plan.

ATPE recommends full public disclosure of requests for waivers or exemptions.

ATPE recommends oversight be established and maintained for any waivers or exemptions.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(34) Consolidation

ATPE opposes forced consolidation of school districts or district services but supports state incentive aid for districts to consolidate or divide if either would be advantageous to an equitable and efficient education for students.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(35) Commissioner of Education

ATPE recommends that the Texas Commissioner of Education be required to have at least five years of classroom teaching experience in a pre-K through 12th-grade public school setting.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(36) Bus driving

ATPE opposes requiring school district employees to obtain a bus driver's license as a condition of their employment contract unless the employee's primary assignment is that of bus driver.

ATPE recommends that school district policies regarding school bus operators' hours adhere to acceptable safety standards.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(37) Prekindergarten

ATPE supports a fully funded, optional prekindergarten program for all.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(38) Educator speech and political involvement

ATPE opposes undue restrictions that would limit the ability of educators to express their political views.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt.

RATIONALE: This is an ongoing issue.

(39) Educator working conditions and schedules

ATPE urges the state and districts to promote working environments for educators that are respectful of their professionalism and autonomy.

ATPE supports efforts to ensure schools have the resources and optimal staffing, including paraprofessionals, necessary to give teachers adequate time for planning and fulfilling any other mandates of the job, including required professional development.

ATPE supports the protection and enhancement of classroom planning or preparation time for instruction.

COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

BOARD RECOMMENDATION: Readopt as amended.

RATIONALE: The committee wanted to recognize the role of adequate paraprofessional staffing in creating a positive environment for working and learning.