

Release date: December 4, 2019

## South Dakota School Superintendents Respond to Budget Address

The Executive Board of the South Dakota School Superintendents Association voted unanimously on Wednesday, December 4, 2019 to issue the following statement in response to Governor Noem's budget address:

The 2016 Legislature passed into law what has become known as the "[Blue Ribbon Task Force Recommendation](#)", which did the following:

- Designated \$63 million in on-going money for teacher's salaries that moved South Dakota out of "51<sup>st</sup>" in the nation, and allowed our public schools to compete for the best and brightest teachers in our region to stay in South Dakota. The allocation of that money is carefully monitored by the Joint Appropriations through the work of the School Finance Accountability Board.
- Reduced the amount of growth in capital outlay, cutting eligible tax collections for structures and equipment; a revenue reduction (now approximately \$24 million annually) which will continue to increase.
- Eliminated the pension fund levy, a reduction of approximately \$4.5 million annually in taxes.
- Refunded property tax payers by using 40% of the new "half-penny sales tax" as a reduction in property taxes.
- The law put in statute a requirement that the "[Target Teacher Salary](#)" would increase each year by the "Consumer Price Index" or 3%, whichever is less, which assures South Dakotans that teacher salaries will continue to remain competitive in the region.

School Superintendents want the public to know that our organization is deeply concerned with a series of events that are affecting South Dakota's public school districts.

- The 2018 legislature failed to meet the statute in just the second year of existence, reducing the increase to 1% when CPI was 1.7%.
- Governor Noem's budget proposal calls for a 0% increase in the "Teacher Target Salary" while the Consumer Price Index is at 2%.
- Public schools are being criticized for their state test scores.

Our organization wants our communities to know the following:

- Individual students are learning and growing.
  - Many of our students enter school with lower entry skills than at any time in history.
  - The number of students attending school with mental health issues is increasing at an exponential rate.
  - Workforce initiatives are bringing in students from all over the world who are learning at amazing rates, however, are required to test in language proficiency after just one year in the country.

- The number of students with special needs continues to grow as children grow up in a complicated world.
  - Children with serious conduct and legal issues are increasing in our public schools with behaviors that are interrupting all children's learning environments. The capacity of our public schools to create programming to meet these behaviors is taxed.
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- Despite these growing challenges, we practice "Agape Love" with every child, welcoming them, finding out how they learn best, and then stretching them to gain skills and become productive citizens.
  - Our teachers love our students – and our students love our teachers. We believe that South Dakota communities are very happy with what is happening in their public schools, and we invite legislators to visit the public schools in their district to learn first-hand about the wonderful learning environments created by South Dakota teachers every day.
  - We want the public and our elected officials to know that we need their support for public schools. The key to keeping the best and brightest teachers is tied to the 2016 legislation. All of the gains are lost when we slide further behind the cost of living.

South Dakota School Superintendents call for the legislature to meet the 2% cost of living factor addressed in statute, supporting the critical role our teachers play in meeting the learning needs of our students.

Respectfully Submitted,  
Terry Nebelsick, SDSSA President  
Mark Naugle, SDSSA Vice-President