

Cooper Accuses Republicans Of Blocking Teacher Raises

By Donna Martinez

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The following is statement from Governor Roy Cooper's Office:

Many North Carolina teachers head back to school this week to prepare for the first day of class. Unfortunately, these hardworking teachers have not received a state pay raise this year because Republican stalling is holding up budget negotiations. Governor Cooper's budget compromise proposal would offer teachers a raise more than twice as big as the Republican budget.

On Tuesday in Raleigh, Governor Cooper is meeting with educators from across the state to talk about the importance of a significant teacher pay raise for teacher recruitment and retention, which is vital to student success.

"I am vetoing this budget because it fails in many ways."

When Governor Cooper vetoed the budget earlier this year, he was clear that it fell short on several points. The lack of Medicaid expansion has gotten the most attention because of Republican stubbornness on the issue, but the Governor's veto was also about Republican efforts to shortchange public education. Here's what the Governor actually said the day he announced his veto:

[The Republican budget] values corporate tax breaks over classrooms. Gimmicks over guaranteed school construction. And political ideology over people.

For starters, let's look at education. We trust our teachers to educate our children. Let's put our money where our trust is. Instead of another corporate tax break, let's pay our teachers and show them the respect they deserve...

...Let me be clear about something – I am not vetoing this budget just because it fails to expand Medicaid. I am vetoing this budget because it fails in many ways. This budget is an astonishing failure of common sense and common decency.

Cooper's Raise is More Than Twice the Republican Raise

Governor Cooper's compromise proposal, sent to the legislature on July 9, included an average 8.5% raise for North Carolina teachers. The Republican budget offered a 3.8% raise. A significant raise for our teachers is an investment in our students. It will help attract and retain more high-quality educators and allow those teachers to stay focused on the classroom instead of worrying about making ends meet. This is vital for student success.

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North Carolina is competing with other states for top teaching talent. A 3.8% pay raise over two years is not enough to stay competitive with recent pay raises in neighboring states and, based on current projections, could cause North Carolina to drop in the national ranking of teacher salaries.

Republican Stalling is Preventing a Teacher Raise

Governor Cooper's compromise proposal has languished with Republican leaders for 42 days while they attempt to override his veto in vain. That's 42 days that could have been spent negotiating a consensus budget that would show our teachers the respect they deserve. The reason that teachers have not yet gotten their state raise is because Republican leaders have spent their time trying to override the veto instead of negotiating.

The Bottom Line

On all the metrics, Governor Cooper's compromise offer is better for public education than the Republican budget. When he vetoed the Republican budget, Governor Cooper was joined by teachers because they support his efforts to do more for our students. School is just about back in session. Governor Cooper is ready to negotiate a budget to move our state forward by investing in public education and a significant teacher pay raise, he just needs Republican leaders to come to the table.