



June 9, 2015

The Honorable Scott Fitzgerald
Senate Majority Leader
Room 211 South, State Capitol
Madison, WI

The Honorable Robin Vos
Assembly Speaker
Room 211 West, State Capitol
Madison, WI

The Honorable Alberta Darling
Senate Co-Chair, Joint Finance Committee
Room 317 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI

The Honorable John Nygren
Assembly Co-Chair, Joint Finance Committee
Room 309 East, State Capitol
Madison, WI

Dear Senator Fitzgerald, Senator Darling, Speaker Vos & Representative Nygren:

We, the undersigned organizations representing school boards, administrators and business officials respectfully request that language in the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) K-12 education omnibus motion relating to timelines for contract renewal/nonrenewal for teachers and administrators be removed.

This language would modify the dates by which a school board must give a teacher or administrator written notice of renewal /nonrenewal of his or her contract in odd-numbered years in which the biennial state budget is adopted and would modify the date for administrators in all years.

Over the past decade or so, the date by which the state budget has been adopted has varied from as early as June 29 and as late as October 26, with a typical enactment date in mid- to late-July, introducing considerable uncertainty into the contract renewal process. It now appears that even this year's budget, which the governor introduced several weeks ahead of schedule, may not be finalized until the end of June or perhaps early July.

It is unclear what problem these modifications to the contract renewal timelines were intended to fix; however, it is very clear that these provisions will cause significant problems for school boards and school districts and could adversely affect Wisconsin's labor market for recent college graduates.

The present teacher contract law timeline is well-aligned to the college graduation cycle of students with education degrees and it allows school boards to offer positions to new college graduates as they are coming out of teacher preparation programs.

If the provisions adopted by the JFC become law and teaching position openings cannot be confirmed and boards can't offer positions to new graduates while awaiting passage of the state budget, we may lose them to neighboring states (e.g., Minnesota, Iowa, Illinois, etc.) that are in a position to offer the recent graduate the job earlier. This could exacerbate the flight to other states of highly qualified teachers who desire more certainty with respect to their job status at an earlier time.

These changes could also harm smaller and rural districts, which typically pay less than suburban and urban districts. Pushing the hiring timeline back could create a “feeding frenzy” competition among districts for available candidates in July and August when districts should be preparing for the school year but will instead be forced to make last second hiring decisions, and the same situation will apply for administrators.

It should also be noted that pushing the contract renewal timeline back into the summer during odd-numbered years in which the biennial state budget is adopted will likely make it harder for schools to reach many teachers to provide them with written notifications, because they are no longer at school each day. It may also make it harder for school boards to convene private conferences, to which teachers are by law entitled during the summer months.

It is also unclear why administrators are included together with teachers in this provision given the vital role they have in school district operations, their lower numbers, and the reality that school districts nonrenew administrators for budgetary reasons on a far less frequent basis than teachers.

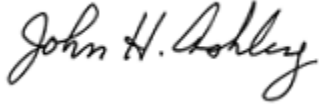
Current law provides a separate timeline for administrator contract renewals because administrators implement district personnel decisions. This change will affect the contracts of school principals, who typically play a key role in hiring teachers. This could put a school district into the dilemma of whether, during a budget year, it should wait until the principal is hired to begin hiring teachers, or hire teachers and the principal simultaneously in order to get all staff members in place in time for the start of school.

School district administrators play a major role in assembling school district budgets, which is often a more difficult and complicated task during a year in which a biennial state budget is enacted, and the modified timeline in the provisions adopted by the JFC could make it difficult to get a new superintendent in place with sufficient time before the school district's annual meeting and /or budget hearing must by law be held.

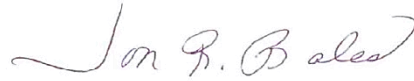
Together, we urge that the changes to teacher and administrator contract renewal timelines adopted by the Joint Finance Committee be removed from the state budget and be approached in a more thoughtful manner that includes a public hearing and an opportunity for input by the public and school officials.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



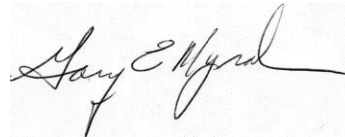
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