

2009 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Victory in defeat was the theme of this legislative year. Our greatest victory was the defeat of Senate Bill 834. Oklahoma teachers and support professionals successfully protected their pay, due process rights and contract negotiations. HB 1598 also added protection for education employees against false criminal reports and student assaults.

However, we also saw the extension of temporary contracts along with the stale rhetoric of how hard it is to fire a teacher. SB 582 made becoming a highly-qualified, certified teacher as easy as taking an online test.

While it was discouraging to witness that education reform for some of our legislators meant lower teacher standards, benefits and pay, it is encouraging to know that through our collective voice, we were able to preserve public education. Next year, we have HOPE through State Question 744 and we will move public education forward. Below is a list of the major education bills that passed and failed this session.

Defeated

SB 834 – This bill could have eliminated due process, guaranteed salaries above the state minimum and contract negotiations statewide. The measure, which would have allowed all districts to follow the Charter Schools Act and ignore most mandates, was vetoed by Gov. Henry.

HB 1935 – This bill threatened to remove teachers and retired teachers from the Teacher Retirement System Board.

HB 1575 – This bill would have allowed districts to place all newly hired teachers on a temporary contract for up to five semesters. Henry vetoed the bill after the session.

Signed into law

HB 1598 – This bill makes it unlawful and punishable to file a false criminal report against an education employee, prohibits students from assaulting or harming an education employee and requires suspension or restricts enrollment for students convicted of assaulting a school employee.

HB 1070 – This bill extends temporary contracts for newly licensed teachers from three to four semesters.

HB 1864 – This bill gives each individual school district the yearly option of calculating the school year by 180 days or 1080 hours.

SB 394 – This bill moves the notification date for teacher contract renewals from April 10 to the first Monday in June. Teachers then have 15 days from that date to notify the district if they will be returning.

SB 582 – This bill allows the American Board for Certification of Teacher Excellence (ABCTE) to certify secondary teachers who pass an online test as a highly qualified teacher. Those certified through this program are exempt from the state teacher residency program.

HJR 1014 – This resolution is referred to as the Anti-Hope amendment. This bill would make it illegal to require the legislature to spend a certain amount of money for any one government service or function. It would also make it illegal to require the legislature to make spending decisions based on how much money any other state spent. This resolution will go to the vote of the people next year.