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## **Organizations Outline \$906 Million in Funding Sources to Fund Education and Provide Raises for State Employees**

### ***School Closures Still a Real Possibility If Legislature Doesn't Act Soon***

OKLAHOMA CITY – The Oklahoma Education Association, the Oklahoma City American Federation of Teachers and the Oklahoma Public Employees Association today outlined a number of funding sources the Oklahoma Legislature could tap to fund education and avoid a state-wide school shutdown.

The plan, as outlined by OEA Executive Director David DuVall during a press conference, identifies \$905.7 million in recurring revenue.

“When we announced the possibility of closing schools earlier this month we intentionally left out a specific plan because we thought the legislature knew where to find money to properly fund our schools,” DuVall said.

“While we appreciate the efforts to find some answers, they have all fallen woefully short.

“What we are offering today is a road map to sustainable funding for our state.”

OEA’s funding suggestions include:

- \$158.7 million through a 5 percent gross production tax
- \$222.9 million in tobacco taxes
- \$149.1 million in motor fuel taxes
- \$177 million in income tax reform, restoration of the earned income tax credit and elimination the capital gains deduction.

Other revenue sources include taxes on alcohol, car tags, ball and dice games at Native American casinos, a hotel/motel tax, sales tax reform and a tax on wind generation.

If the legislature were to use all of the proposed revenue sources, it would find more than enough money to provide teachers with a \$6,000 raise for the 2018-19 school year, a \$2,500 raise for education support professionals (e.g. custodians, food service workers, secretaries, transportation workers, etc.) next year, general revenue for schools to reduce class sizes and purchase classroom materials, a raise for state employees and money to fund health care services that have been cut in recent months.

“Our students are the real victims of the legislature’s failure to properly fund education and our state core government services,” said OEA President Alicia Priest. “Our class sizes have ballooned to impossible numbers. Our schools can’t buy text books for every child. We’ve dropped not only fine arts and foreign language courses, we’ve also dropped advanced placement classes.”

(more)

The OEA was joined at the press conference by OPEA Communications Director Tom Dunning and Oklahoma City AFT President Ed Allen.

Allen said the teacher shortage has been caused by low salaries.

“The last thing educators want to do is walk out of school on April 2. But believe me, that is exactly what will happen if they don’t see a substantial and adequate pay increase,” Allen said “Teachers have been leaving the school district on a regular basis because of the miserable salaries. There was a 25 percent turnover in Oklahoma City in 2017 and it’s mostly because of the low wages. We need to keep and attract great teachers and a good start is to pay them a livable wage.”

Dunning pointed out that state employees are need of a pay increase, too.

“State employees, whose pay is more than 20 percent below market, stand with public educators to insist Oklahoma’s leaders pass a significant pay raise plan and begin to restore funding because they are fed up with excuses for why they can’t have a pay raise,” said Tom Dunning. “While they continue to serve, despite lack of support from many state leaders, employees expect lawmakers to fund a substantial pay raise plan and restore state agency funding. If lawmakers don’t act, state employees and those they serve will have many questions as they go to the polls this fall.”

Priest said the association is moving forward with closing all Oklahoma schools if the legislature can’t find a way to fund education by April 1. As of the press conference, more than 125 school boards had passed resolutions supporting teachers who walk out.

“The legislature has the ability to keep us in the classroom on April 2,” she said. “There is time in the next week to pass these measures and invest in our children.”