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## **Pay Increases and Restored Education Funding Highlight OEA Request to Legislature**

### ***School Closures Planned for April 2 if Legislature Doesn't Act Now***

Significant raises for teachers and support professionals and the restoration of funding cuts to public schools are the foundation of the Oklahoma Education Association's demand to the legislature to prevent a statewide school closure on April 2.

In addition, the OEA is calling for state employee raises and improved health care funding in a three-year plan. The package totals \$812 million for FY 2019.

"Teachers and support professionals of Oklahoma are angry and frustrated with the legislature for not doing its job. We have tried several different paths to improve education funding, but none have worked," OEA President Alicia Priest said. "If the legislature cannot properly fund education and core state services by the legal deadline of April 1, we are prepared to close schools and stay at the Capitol until it gets done."

OEA's proposal calls for funding increases during the next three years:

- \$10,000 teacher pay increase, including a \$6,000 raise for the FY19 budget.
- \$5,000 pay increase for full-time support professionals (school secretaries, custodians, bus drivers, mechanics, food service workers, etc.), including \$2,500 raises in the first year.
- \$200 million to restore public school funding, which has been cut more than any other state in the nation since 2008, including \$75 million in the first year.
- \$213 million for state employee pay raises, which is \$71 million each year for the next three years.
- \$255.9 million in health care funding during the next two years: \$234.6 million in FY19 and \$21.3 million in FY20.

"Being last in the country in teacher pay and at the bottom of per pupil funding cannot be our vision for Oklahoma," Priest said. "Our teacher shortage has reached catastrophic levels because it's so easy for teachers to move to Texas or Arkansas, or even to another profession, and make much more money."

"We have thousands of full-time support professionals who live below the poverty line. These people are vital to the day-to-day operations of our schools and play a significant role in our students' lives."

(more)

Priest said that the OEA plan does not identify any specific revenue sources because the legislature has seen several plans over the last two years that have included dozens of options.

“We have found we cannot cut our way to prosperity. Our health care system is cutting services to our most at-risk populations. That includes children who are also our students,” Priest said. “State employees have not had a raise in nearly 10 years, either.”

Over the next few weeks, school districts will be organizing to close schools. In some big communities, that will include putting processes in place to help children receive food and tutors for students getting ready to take the ACT or Advance Placement exams.

At the Capitol, OEA members and staff lobbyists will continue working with legislators to find answers to the state’s funding issues.

“School closures are not our goal,” Priest said. “Properly funding education and our state’s core services is the goal.”