

BILL ON TEACHER LAYOFFS PASSES MINNESOTA SENATE



On Monday, the Minnesota Senate approved a bill that would allow schools to lay off teachers based on performance rather than solely relying on seniority. The bill was passed by a 36-24 majority and connects performance of a teacher to performance of students under his or her tutelage. Prior to the passing of this bill, the state required that school districts rely solely upon the factor of seniority to decide layoffs. However, individual school districts had the freedom to separately negotiate for other qualifying conditions. According to the new system, at least one-third of the evaluation of a teacher would depend upon the performance of his/her students. Senator Pam Wolf, who was among lead sponsors of the bill, said that the new law would help schools to retain the most effective teachers. "More matters than just when you sign the contract," said Senator Wolf, who teaches at Pines School at the Anoka County Juvenile Center. Democrats opposed the bill saying that a statewide teacher evaluation system needs more time to mature before layoff policies are changed. Senator LeRoy Stumpf said "This challenge that we gave the education community to come up with an evaluation system ... it's one of the most difficult challenges we've ever laid on them." Supporters of the bill said since the new system would come into effect from the 2014-2015 session and would not affect layoffs before the 2016-17 session, there was sufficient time to put checks and balances into place. Senator David Tomassoni said "Even if the bill says you can't (lay off) based on their salary, they'll figure out a way to make senior teachers ineffective and lay them off." Tom Dooher, who leads a union of 70,000 public school educators, said there is already a process to evaluate teachers and remove those who are ineffective. Dooher said, "I think this bill is confusing layoffs with ineffectiveness ... we shouldn't have to wait for layoffs to get rid of ineffective teachers. If there are ineffective teachers, there are pathways to get rid of them. This bill is jumbling those two things together and not serving students by doing so." The House had passed legislation similar in nature earlier this month. That version would have permitted teachers who were still in their probationary periods to be laid off first. Governor Mark Dayton, a former teacher, has not yet made any public comments on the bills, but will consider both.

<https://blog.granted.com/>