

## MISSOURI HOUSE PASSES MERIT BASES EDUCATION LAYOFF BILL



It used to be that when times got tough in terms of economics civil servants have a certain degree of protection from the general turmoil. Certain jobs, such as policemen, firefighters, and school teachers seems it is almost sacred in previous downturns, but this is not the case in the current bad economy. Long gone are the days when having tenure with a public school guaranteed you a job for life. Many school districts are only cutting teachers, but they're moving into a new way of doing so. The new way will rank teachers on performance, instead of just on their longevity with the school system. As you can imagine this new system is popular with government officials, who believe that they are getting the most bang for their buck in keeping none but the best teachers, but unpopular with teachers and their unions who've long enjoy the protection of tenure. Where the places where the right to use this new system is being tested out right now is the state of Missouri. This week the state house in the state of Missouri recently passed a piece of legislation that would prevent seniority from playing a role in decisions about teacher layoffs in the state. With many school districts in the state, and districts around the nation, being forced to let go of staff this kind of the law could significantly change who gets the layoff noticed and how they determined. In order to protect older teachers from being cut simply for being more expensive the bill also prohibits including the teacher salary as a factor for layoffs. Factors that will be included, should the bill pass final approval, will include any special training, certifications, and any enrichment programs that teachers are participating in at the school. On the negative side previous misconduct, absences or other bad behavior could be held against teachers when the time comes for layoffs. While many former teachers and administrators in the school system have claimed that this is an attack on the way that schools currently operate, one has to wonder why a teacher should be given any different treatment than workers in any other field. After all in the private sector, as well as in many other types of civil service jobs, workers are judged based on their performance. Before the bill can actually be passed into Missouri state law it must be approved by the state Senate. This means that the bill will either be passed almost immediately, or delayed until after the break which must start on the 18th. If that break passes with no vote on the legislation then it will have to be delayed until after the break. At that time the bill could get buried under a large pile of left over work. Currently Missouri is not the only state, or city, considering a plan that eliminates the teachers who are the worst at their job, instead of the ones who have simply been there the shortest amount of time.

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