

Teachers association requests pay increase, rejects Martin's plan

From Associated Press reports

RALEIGH — The state's biggest teacher organization Monday asked the General Assembly for a 12 percent pay increase next year, while the State Board of Education chairman also called Gov. Jim Martin's proposed 4.5 percent raise inadequate.

"While we respect the governor's responsibility to present what he considers his best recommendations, we believe that he has fallen short of what is possible and needed in several areas," said Gladys Graves, president of the N.C. Association of Educators (NCAE).

Graves also urged the Legislature's Joint Appropriations Committee to lift the freeze on step increases in the public school salary schedule and to spend \$16.7 million for the final installment of a four-year experiment with a career ladder program. But she reiterated the NCAE's opposition to statewide implementation of the career ladder without further evaluation.

Graves presented the NCAE's budget request after Howard Haworth, chairman of the State Board of Education, outlined that group's supplemental budget proposals for fiscal 1988-89. The board's request totaled \$193.4 million, compared with \$131.7 million recommended by Martin for public schools.

Martin's blueprint for adding \$558 million to the 1988-89 state budget is the focus of the Appropriations Committee's hearings in preparation for the short session that gets under way June 2.

Haworth, a Martin appointee, recommended a 7 percent pay increase for all public school employees. It would cost \$169.5 million instead of the \$110 million recommended by the governor for school personnel and other state employees. Under Martin's plan, some employees would receive less than a 4.5 percent raise if merit pay, frozen since 1982, is restored.

A 12 percent pay raise for teachers and administrators, as recommended by the NCAE, would cost \$240 million.

Haworth noted that the board had set a goal two years ago of boosting teacher pay by 28 percent over the next four years. The Legislature provided 5 percent the first year, 1986, and 6.5 percent in 1987.

To get back on schedule would require a 9 percent raise in 1988-89 but the board considered that unreal-

istic "under the current economic circumstances and the revenue flow projections," Haworth said.

But he urged lawmakers to provide a 7 percent raise "if at all possible," saying it would accomplish another board goal of a \$20,000 starting salary for teachers.

Despite their customary eagerness to grant higher raises than Martin, a Republican seeking re-election this year, Democratic leaders were not optimistic about meeting either the NCAE or education board requests.

"Four and a half is right strong. Possibly five," said Rep. Billy Watkins, D-Granville, chairman of the House Appropriations Committee. He said he wasn't surprised by the pleas for more money but added, "Before you give that much you've got to start talking about which taxes you're going to raise."

Senate Appropriations Committee chairman Aaron Plyler, D-Union, agreed. "I don't know where the money's going to come from. Naturally, we want to do what we can. But with the revenue picture, I just don't see doing much more than the governor proposed."

Some lawmakers have accused Martin of requesting up to \$100 million more than revenue estimates justify, which he denies. David Crotts, the Legislature's chief fiscal analyst, was scheduled to report on his latest revenue projections Wednesday.

Graves said she did not consider the NCAE proposal unrealistic. "I have great expectations."

The public schools joined the Department of Community Colleges and the UNC system, which made their requests to the committee last week, in asking the Legislature to go beyond Martin's budget recommendations for education.

The board of education's package also included \$24.2 million to boost pay and benefits for school bus drivers as the state recruits adult replacements for 17-year-old bus drivers and \$12.5 million for the first year of a five-year plan to increase the per-child amount for the academically gifted to the same rate as the handicapped (\$1,536).

The board also requested \$144,574 for the two additional teacher certification specialists in the Department of Public Education, which state Superintendent of Public Instruction Craig Phillips acknowledged would still leave that office shorthanded.



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