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Resolve, To Establish the Study Commission Regarding Teachers' Salaries

Emergency preamble. Whereas, acts and resolves of the Legislature do not become effective until 90 days after adjournment unless enacted as emergencies; and

Whereas, this resolve establishes the Study Commission Regarding Teachers' Salaries to study the issues confronting citizens of this State who depend on the retention of a stable, experienced corps of professional teachers in this State's public schools to ensure that the State's public school students will acquire the knowledge and skills essential for college, career and citizenship in the 21st century; and

Whereas, the study must be initiated before the 90-day period expires in order that the study may be completed and a report submitted in time for submission to the next legislative session; and

Whereas, in the judgment of the Legislature, these facts create an emergency within the meaning of the Constitution of Maine and require the following legislation as immediately necessary for the preservation of the public peace, health and safety; now, therefore, be it

Sec. 1 Commission established. Resolved: That the Study Commission Regarding Teachers' Salaries, referred to in this resolve as "the commission," is established; and be it further

Sec. 2 Commission membership. Resolved: That the commission consists of 13 members appointed as follows:

1. Two Senators, appointed by the President of the Senate;
2. Five members of the House of Representatives, appointed by the Speaker of the House;
3. Three teachers recommended by the President of the Maine Education Association and appointed by the Governor;
4. One superintendent of a regional school unit, recommended by the President of Maine School Superintendents Association and appointed by the Governor;
5. The Commissioner of Education, or the commissioner's designee, as an ex officio nonvoting member; and
6. The Commissioner of Labor, or the commissioner's designee, as an ex officio nonvoting member; and be it further

Sec. 3 Chairs. Resolved: That the first-named Senate member is the Senate chair and the first-named House of Representatives member is the House chair of the commission; and be it further

Sec. 4 Appointments; convening of commission. Resolved: That all appointments must be made no later than 30 days following the effective date of this resolve. The appointing authorities shall notify the Executive Director of the Legislative Council once all appointments have been completed. Within 15 days after appointment of all members, the chairs shall call and convene the first meeting of the commission, which must be no later than July 1, 2009; and be it further

Sec. 5 Duties. Resolved: That the commission shall study all issues surrounding teachers' salaries. In conducting its review, the commission shall undertake to examine:

1. The effects on teachers' salaries of the essential programs and services funding system for public education, including the elements of labor market adjustments, student-teacher ratios and a teachers' salary matrix;

2. The effects on teachers' salaries of the minimum teachers' salary law and the existing system of state subsidies for substandard salaries;

3. The relationship between and among teachers' salaries in school administrative units, the amount and distribution of general purpose aid for local schools and amounts raised locally for the support of public schools;

4. The relationship between teachers' salaries in this State and in other states;

5. The relationship between teachers' salaries and salaries paid to practitioners in other comparable professions;

6. The effects of inflation on the real value of teachers' salaries and the minimum salary amount required by law;

7. Practices in other states that mandate payment of minimum salaries based on experience and education to all teachers and their costs and consequences; and

8. Factors relating to the age, experience, recruitment, retention and mobility of the State's corps of professional teachers; and be it further

Sec. 6 Staff assistance. Resolved: That the Legislative Council shall provide necessary staffing services to the commission; and be it further

Sec. 7 Report. Resolved: That, no later than December 1, 2009, the commission shall submit a report that includes its findings and recommendations, including suggested legislation, to the Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs. The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs is authorized to introduce a bill related to the subject matter of the report to the Second Regular Session of the 124th Legislature upon receipt of the report.

Emergency clause. In view of the emergency cited in the preamble, this legislation takes effect when approved.

SUMMARY

This resolve establishes the Study Commission Regarding Teachers' Salaries to investigate conditions affecting teachers' salaries in this State, which despite the enactment of a minimum teachers'

salary law and substantial increases in general purpose aid for local schools in recent years have not kept pace with inflation and have declined in rank relative to other states in the nation. The resolve authorizes the commission to make findings and recommendations and to submit suggested legislation to ensure that all teachers are paid at rates that are commensurate with their experience, education, professional responsibilities and essential role in the development of the State's economy and human capital.