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Senate GOP pitches teacher raise

plan

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Posted May 25, 2016

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By Mark Binker

RALEIGH, N.C. — Senate leaders say their budget includes a teacher pay plan that ensures educators hit the top of the state's salary scale in 15 years and raises average teacher salaries to more than \$54,000 over two years.

"We think this is the right plan for teachers in North Carolina at this time,"
Senate President Pro Tem

[Phil Berger](#) said.

Berger, R-Rockingham, did not say how his chamber would pay for the raises



Berger rolls out Senate teacher pay plan

and did not provide a detailed salary schedule. However, he said that tax collections have been on the upswing in recent years and that a generally improving economy allowed the Senate to take up long-delayed priorities.

"We put forward where our priorities are," he said.

Along with plans from Gov. Pat McCrory and the state House, this is the third major teacher raise proposal put forward by state government this year, although all three work somewhat differently.

The Senate will roll out its entire budget next week, Berger said. When asked how the Senate budget would deal with pay raises for state employees or other areas of spending, he said he was "not prepared" to discuss those items.

Referring reporters to [a website put together by the Senate Republicans' political operation](#), he pointed out that the raises would make North Carolina's teacher pay the highest in the Southeast and 24th in the country.

"This is on top of the teacher pay raises we passed in the 2014 and 2015 budgets," Berger said.

He said the Senate plan would move teachers to the top of the pay scale within 15 years rather than the current 25 years of service needed to max out.

Brenda Berg, president of BEST NC, a group of business leaders that have advocated for more education funding, said that faster rise to the top of the salary scale is key to stemming the tide of young teachers leaving the profession due to poor pay.

"We know they're leaving early in their career, and this is why they're leaving," Berg said.

She said it makes sense to raise salaries quickly over the first decade of a teacher's career.

"These 10 to 15 years are when you're making the most professional progress," Berg said.

Teacher pay has been [a major political issues for years in North Carolina](#), with school systems and advocacy organizations alike saying that the state is losing teachers to other professions and other states.

State government provides a base salary for all teachers across the state. Most, but not all, county school systems also provide a supplement on top of that base pay. That means the actual salary a teacher is paid varies widely across the

state. The average salary estimate in the Senate's pay plan includes those local supplements.

Rodney Ellis, president of the North Carolina Association of Educators, said that the "devil is going to be in the details" of any teacher pay proposal.

"NCAE has consistently beaten the drum that, for our students to be more successful, we must invest fully in our public schools by increasing the resources they have and by compensating educators as professionals," Ellis said in a statement. "Now, because it's an election year, Senate leaders are trying to play catch-up from the destructive swath they created for our public schools. ... Last time there was a pay raise, they promised it would get us to 32nd in the country, and here we sit at 41st."

McCrory's proposed teacher pay plan [would raise the average teacher's salary to \\$50,000](#). The House [budget proposed slightly smaller raises](#) in order to make sure there was enough money to give raises to other state employees, something McCrory's plan did not do.

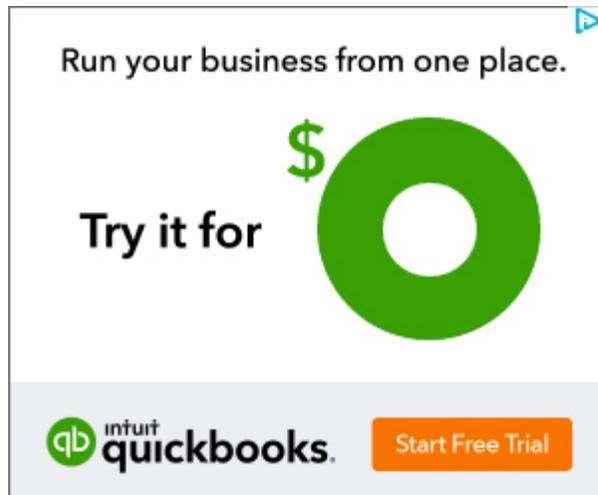
After the Senate passes its budget bill, members of the House, the Senate and the Governor's Office will negotiate a final plan. If recent history is any guide, none of the teacher raise proposals floated early on the in the process will be precisely what passes into law this summer, although all three make raising teacher salary a priority.

CREDITS

Reporter

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