

Issue: FL Education

Abysmal Florida Teacher Pay

Background

Republican Senator Keith Perry (who currently represents the 8th District in Florida) has claimed that he successfully raised teacher pay during his time as an elected official, but his track record shows otherwise. According to the Florida Education Association, from 2009-2018 (6 years of which Perry was in the Florida House of Representatives and 2 years of which he was in the Florida Senate), average teacher pay (K-12) in Florida decreased 12.2% in inflation-adjusted dollars. It is now 17% lower than the national average.¹ Relatedly, Florida's public-school teachers and education staff professionals rank 45th or lower when compared to other states in terms of average salary.²

In 2015, Senator Perry opposed Darren Soto's SB 280 which would have funded the Florida Education Finance Program to ensure a starting salary of \$50,000 for teachers.³ Senator Perry instead supported a much more modest proposal which entailed bonuses for a small subset of teachers.

Impacts of Low Teacher Pay

- Florida public schools are losing new teachers at an alarming rate. According to state records, 40% of new teachers are leaving the classroom within their first 5 years, a rate which is well above the national average.⁴ High teacher turnover can be disruptive to a school's culture and organization, making it hard to implement curricula, foster good relationships among staff and build trust.
- According to the Florida Education Association, teacher pay in Florida is so low that many teachers are forced to take a second job to make ends meet.⁵ In some cases, this means that teachers have less time to sleep and prepare for the classroom. As a result, our students are receiving a lower quality of education.
- This shockingly low pay also disincentivizes young people from becoming teachers. This means that, in many cases, our best and brightest are not choosing to pursue a career in teaching and therefore our students are not receiving consistently high quality instruction.

Higher Education

Last year, Senator Keith Perry was Vice Chair of the Appropriations Committee on Higher Education. During his time as vice chair, Florida's higher education system experienced another year of budget cuts.

¹ <http://floridapolitics.com/archives/267288-teachers-union-lawmakers-pay>

² *ibid.*

³ <http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2015/0280>

⁴ <http://floridapolitics.com/archives/267288-teachers-union-lawmakers-pay>

⁵ *ibid.*