



September 16, 2016

Dear Members of the Arizona Legislature:

The 2016-2017 school year is underway. Across the state students and teachers have returned to the classroom, and thanks to the passage of Proposition 123, our schools have additional funding to provide some of the resources needed to help all Arizona students achieve academic success. Districts are using the funds for a variety of needs based on local priorities. They include raises for teachers and support staff, classroom resources and technology, replacing out-of-date textbooks, making overdue facility repairs and replacing old buses. While some may think Prop 123 solves all school funding issues, it is important to remember the funding only restores 18 percent of the \$1.5 billion that has been cut from public education since 2008. Since 2008, school districts have lost funding for classroom support, excess utilities, full day kindergarten, building maintenance, textbooks and technology and 9<sup>th</sup> grade JTED funding. So while the funding from Proposition 123 is appreciated, it unfortunately gets absorbed very quickly by the many pressing needs that schools have deferred over the years due to the cuts.

AZ Schools Now, a coalition of organizations representing parents, teachers, school board members and administrators, and citizens from across Arizona, has compiled a list of the ways in which some school districts across Arizona are using their Proposition 123 funding. That list is attached, but here are several examples:

- Sunnyside Unified School District raised teachers' salaries 8.5 percent and also increased wages for classified employees by 6.5 percent, professional non-teaching employees by 6.2 percent and administrators by 3.75 percent.
- Peoria Unified School District received \$7.3 million from Proposition 123. The district gave a base-pay increase for all staff of 4.31 percent, which amounts to \$6.1 million, \$750,000 for instructional resources for the classroom, and \$400,000 for special education staffing.
- Kyrene Elementary School District received \$6.6 million and is using \$2.2 million for increased staff compensation, with \$1.55 million going to teachers, \$500,000 to support staff and \$150,000 to administration. \$1.4 million will be spent on restoring school budgets for site-specific hiring of essential support personnel such as crossing guards and staff for lunch and recess duty.
- Chino Valley Unified School District will spend the \$482,539 it received on an average raise of 3.2 percent for its teachers and staff, and it will also use funds for capital improvements, including buying a bus for their special needs students.

- In Douglas Unified, 69 percent of their Prop 123 funds will be used for debt reduction, technology and other items, while 14 percent will go to teacher raises of about \$400 each.

Perhaps the best example that the Prop 123 funds must be just the first step is the severe teacher shortage that Arizona is currently facing. The Arizona School Personnel Administrators Association recently completed a survey of 130 school districts and charter schools. The survey found 2,041 teacher openings that still need to be filled for the 2016-2017 school year. They reported that 47 percent of teacher positions in their schools are either vacant or were filled by individuals not meeting standard teaching requirements. A copy of the survey results is attached. Arizona's public schools are counting on the legislature to take the promised next steps in funding public education and address what has become a teacher shortage crisis.

Arizona voters agree. An Arizona Republic/Morrison Institute/Cronkite News poll conducted in the last two weeks found that 74 percent of registered voters in Arizona believe the state is spending "too little" on K-12 public education. The Arizona Schools Now coalition looks forward to working with you during the 2017 legislative session on the next steps to restore the funding Arizona's public schools need to ensure all students achieve successful academic outcomes.

Sincerely,



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