

April 12, 2021

Summary of current events:

We are outnumbered on Speaker's proposed pension task force. While last week felt like a victory of sorts, we learned that the road to protecting the teachers' pension is still littered with potholes. On Friday, the House Government Operations Committee unveiled who it wanted to [sit on the task force](#) that would be charged with drafting an approach to the pension's funding issues. In short, only four of the task force's 15 members would be state employees and teachers. The House gets six, the Senate gets six, the treasurer gets a seat, two commissioners from the administration gets a seat, a member of the "business community" gets a seat; even a school board member gets a seat. Vermont-NEA Executive Director Jeff Fannon testified against this approach. "The Task Force lacks balance, which is absolutely critical to convey fairness," Fannon said. "We believe the composition of the Task Force must be revised to include greater participant voice. Moreover, there is no rational reason to include a "member of the business community" when the plans are all public sector plans not private sector plans." Fannon also called on lawmakers to give the task force until Oct. 15 to complete its work and broaden its scope to fully explore the economic and social impacts on changes to the pension. [Read Jeff's testimony here.](#)

The House still wants to charge teachers for their underfunding mess. In a draft of [guiding principles for approaches to the pension's funding issues](#), the House Government Operations Committee last week insisted that lawmakers must find ways to cut state funding. Indeed, the draft suggests that the legislature set "a pension stabilization target" that relies on reducing actuarially determined employer contributions. In other words, the House leadership wants to continue to heap the burden of the pension's funding issues on teachers. This is the exact wrong time for the state to go small: The House leadership seems to be arguing that the state cannot afford to do the right thing. But as Vermont's students return from the pandemic, their needs will increase. And attacking the pension is already having an effect: retirements and resignations appear on the increase, according to [this report in VTDigger](#). *In fact, the state cannot afford NOT to do right by teachers and students.*

Take Action:

While the legislature has moved off their plan on ice for now, we still need to you take critical action to protect your pension!

- **Contact your Legislators – Balance and Fairness in Pension Task Force** – Key House members will take action in the coming week on their pension task force. They need to hear from you! Click here to make your voice heard again: <https://actionnetwork.org/letters/tell-house-gov-ops-and-appropriations-pension-task-force-must-be-fair-and-balanced/>
- **Get Red for Ed - Wear Red for Ed on Fridays** – Show solidarity with you fellow teachers across the state as you stand up to protect your pension. Post your photo: <https://www.facebook.com/events/809210193017023/>
- **EVENT - VT Parents & Community Stand in Solidarity with Public Employees – Thurs 4/15, 6pm** – Our allies at Rights and Democracy Vermont are putting on this webinar for parents and community members. Please join yourself and share with your local PTO/PTAs. Register here: https://www.mobilize.us/rightsdemocracy/event/381544/?fbclid=IwAR2aieIqXvYwGVoi3u-KCO4IMbCYOI-tFP1k5nR_j5UKIYRja4c8H3pLro4