

On behalf of the Grand Forks Education Association, I am asking you to vote NO on SB 2215.

SB 2215 is a power grab that could strip away local control over education and hurt teachers and students by shrinking the amount of time for negotiating contracts. The bill could silence teachers and ignore work to improve student readiness for the real world and our own working conditions. Taking away the voice of educators, could leave schools without the high-quality teachers who students need, now more than ever.

The current process works well by allowing teachers to speak up for our students, classrooms, and working conditions. The length of negotiations has no effect on students or classrooms, so SB 2215 is a solution in search of a problem.

This bill would drastically shrink the amount of time teachers are able to negotiate contracts. Schools get a majority of their funding from the state legislature, which doesn't usually produce a state budget until late April or early May. Bill 2215 would limit teachers' ability to speak up for our students, classrooms, and working conditions. Adding an end date encourages school boards to limit discussions and ignore the voices of teachers until the new and arbitrary deadline. At that point, School Boards could unilaterally halt negotiations, even if critical issues for teachers and students have gone unaddressed.

Silencing teachers and dramatically limiting the time to discuss critical issues with school boards adds even more stress leading to greater burnout, and likely pushing teachers out of the profession. A recent poll of North Dakota United members showed that 83% of teachers entered education planning to retire as a teacher. Now, that number is down to 50%, largely because of added stress and burnout. The problem is especially pronounced among younger teachers. Only 38% of teachers between ages 30-39 are planning to remain teachers through retirement. Grand Forks Public Schools has already had 2 teachers who have put in their resignations saying it was for a career change. One of those was a 2nd year teacher. How many more will follow?

Although North Dakota institutions are graduating enough teachers, schools across North Dakota consistently have trouble recruiting and retaining teachers for a variety of

reasons, including working conditions at the root of rising stress and burnout. If our negotiations are limited how many more teachers are we going to lose to right across the Red River where teachers have more rights? SB 2215 increases the chance that we will lose many more teachers. Not to other towns in ND but leaving the state completely.

Please VOTE NO on SB 2215.

Sincerely,

Melissa Buchhop

Grand Fork Education Association President