

Press Release



**For Immediate Release:
September 29, 2014**

**For more Information:
Betty Patterson, 575-571-8882**

NEA-NEW MEXICO FILES SUIT – ASKS COURT TO END ILLEGAL TEACHER EVALUATION PROCESS

The National Education Association – New Mexico has filed a lawsuit charging that Governor Martinez, State Education Secretary-Designate Hanna Skandera, and the Public Education Department have overstepped their authority in implementing a statewide teacher evaluation process in violation of existing state law.

The suit asks the state courts to declare the state-imposed evaluation system unlawful and to enjoin the New Mexico Public Education Department from implementing their system.

“Ms. Skandera and the Public Education Department have implemented a teacher evaluation system that does not work, that is not wanted, and that is having a negative impact on teachers, and most especially on children,” said NEA New Mexico President Betty Patterson during a news briefing held in Albuquerque on Monday, September 29.

Also participating in the briefing was District 21 State Representative Mimi Stewart. Stewart is the Chair of the House Education Committee.

“The illegally implemented teacher evaluation system addressed in this lawsuit is just that – an illegal and unfair attack on the profession of teaching,” said Stewart. “This new teacher evaluation system simply does not work. That’s not just my assessment. That’s the assessment from dozens upon dozens of local school superintendents, from all over the state, that I’ve had the opportunity to talk with about this new system.”

The Governor and Ms. Skandera have tried twice to get legislative approval for changes in how teachers in New Mexico are evaluated. Both times the state legislature rejected their proposals.

“It’s quite obvious the state legislature sees the hiring, evaluation, and related personnel decisions regarding local classroom teachers as a responsibility of the local school administration,” said NEA New Mexico Executive Director Charles Bowyer.

Despite having been rejected twice in two years by the state legislature, Governor Martinez and Ms. Skandera moved unilaterally to circumvent the Legislature's authority by imposing a new teacher evaluation plan on local school districts by regulatory fiat.

It's that unilateral action to implement a state-controlled one-size-fits-all evaluation system that eliminates local school boards and administrators from the process that the NEA New Mexico lawsuit is addressing.

"Added to all the many problems with the new evaluation system," says Stewart, "is the disrespectful, unfair, and high-handed way this system has been implemented without any input from local school officials – or – from the people's elected representatives in the Legislature."

Why have the Governor, Ms. Skandera, and the PED moved forward with such a controversial and divisive teacher evaluation plan without state legislative approval?

"Whatever their goals," says NEA New Mexico's Betty Patterson, "it has become quite clear that improving teaching and learning in New Mexico's public schools were not among them."

The NEA-New Mexico law suit was filed in First Judicial District Court, County of Santa Fe, New Mexico. The association is being represented by Jones, Snead, Wertheim, and Clifford, P.A. and the Office of General Counsel of the National Education Association.

#