

# Education Minnesota applauds passage of pension bill

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*ST. PAUL, Minnesota. May 21, 2018* \_ The Minnesota Legislature passed a bill to make necessary adjustments to the pension of tens of thousands of Minnesotans in the final minutes of the session Sunday, which may be the signature legislative achievement of the session.

“A bipartisan group of legislators worked extremely hard to make sure the state kept its promises to its teachers and other public employees. That work paid off late Sunday,” said Denise Specht, president of Education Minnesota. “All the stakeholders made sacrifices, but in the end, thousands of public employees will now have more stable and dignified retirements.”

As of Monday afternoon, Gov. Mark Dayton was considering both the supplemental budget bill and the education and tax bill. Specht said he should carefully consider whether the flawed policy and gimmicky budget shifts contained in the bills are worth it.

“These bills pack important and popular priorities, like school safety, into a sludge of bad ideas that will create problems for schools and communities for many years,” Specht said. “If Minnesotans don’t see that now, they will by November. We will make sure of it. We are educators, after all.”

Also Sunday, the Senate rejected a nominee for a volunteer board for the first time in at least a decade when it removed 2015 Minnesota Teacher of the Year Amy Hewett-Olatunde, on a strict party-line vote, from the Professional Educator Licensing and Standards Board. She had served on the volunteer board for seven months pending confirmation.

“The state government cannot operate without highly qualified people who are willing to donate their time and expertise for the good of their communities. Amy Hewett-Olatunde is a 19-year ELL teacher, earned a doctorate from Hamline University, lectures throughout the country, speaks two languages fluently and several others less well. She is as dedicated to her students and her profession as anyone in Minnesota,” Specht said. “If this is the sort of person who can be denied an opportunity to volunteer her time because of an intemperate post on Facebook, we should all worry about the future of our state, and start campaigning against the lawmakers who led the petty charge against her.”

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