

From: Steve Clouse
To: Lisa Disslin
Subject: Written testimony for March 6, 2023. TRA Tier 2 Reform
Date: Friday, March 03, 2023

LCPR Members and Staff,

Please help reform the Minnesota TRA system. There are bills proposed that will reform and correct the damage and harm that was done after July 1st 1989, when a two Tier retirement system was created, resulting in the elimination of the rule of ninety. The TRA proposal of 60/30 is a step in the right direction and creating a chart that copies WI's age/service year formula could also repair the harm.

My name is Steve Clouse and I teach CTE Career Exploration courses at Nashwauk-Keewatin High School. I am 57 years old and have been teaching for 31 years, twenty-seven in Minnesota. I grew up on a small cattle ranch in Kansas, daily we would walk the fence line looking for holes in the fence. If I didn't mend the fence, the small hole would get bigger, and all the cows would escape to another pasture.

This is what we are seeing in Minnesota, Teachers are leaving the profession for greener pastures. The TRA, LCPR, Governor, and the Legislature need to mend the holes in the retirement system. The inequities between Tier I and Tier II retirement benefits are embarrassing, this disparity has become so large you could drive a school bus through it. The fix will not be cheap, easy, or painless.

Today on the St. Cloud State Ed Post website there are 5,214 active school education vacancy postings, less than a month ago there were 3,631 an increase of 1,583 positions. Who is filling these positions? Are people going into education as a career? Teachers are leaving and there is no one replacing them due to low wages and a very poor retirement benefit if you retire before 66 years of age. This is not a sustainable plan to recruit and retain Teachers, and it is not a Tier II teachers' problem to bear, or fix!

On January 25th, I asked fellow Tier II teachers if they are considering leaving the teaching profession if the NRA is not reduced and the discounts/penalties of retiring before age 66 are eliminated. The responses as of today are 186 teachers have stated that they will be or are considering leaving the teaching profession. I also have had over twenty-eight teachers send me a private message stating that they just can't do this job until they are 66 years old, they are tired and burnt out and feel they have been taken advantage of by the Minnesota TRA system.

I took 13 young women to an "Empower," Women in the Workforce career seminar at our local Community College. There was a panel of twenty professional women, not one was a teacher. They encouraged all the young women to enter a non-traditional career pathway, not one mentioned becoming a teacher. I asked some of the panelists why they did not recommend or go into teaching as a career. Each story was unique, but the underlying theme was that all of them had a parent, friend, or family member who was a teacher. They were discouraged by them from becoming a teacher, mostly due to the low salaries, and poor retirement benefits if they retired before they were 66 years old. Please support Minnesota Tier II reform.

Sincerely,
Steve Clouse
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