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GENERAL MEMORANDUM 26-022

Tribal Educator Parity Bill Introduced to the House

On March 3, 2026, Representative Gabe Vasquez (D-NM-2) and cosponsor Representative Dusty Johnson (R-SD-At Large) introduced the Parity for Tribal Educators Act ([H. R. 7781](#)). The bill was referred to the House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform.

H.R. 7781 aims to create benefits parity between educators employed by schools funded by the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE). Educators at schools directly operated by the BIE, as federal employees, are eligible for federal benefits, including access to federal retirement plans. Yet, educators employed by BIE-funded schools operated by tribes and tribal organizations pursuant to the Tribally Controlled Schools Act ([P.L. 100-297](#)) have not been allowed to share the same federal benefits. The lack of retirement options has proven to be an obstacle for tribally controlled schools to recruit and retain teachers. Tribally controlled schools struggle to offer competitive employment opportunities due to a lack of benefits compared to other public and BIE-operated schools. This is particularly prevalent in New Mexico where recent increases in teacher compensation has made it even more difficult for tribally controlled schools to recruit and retain staff.

H. R. 7781 would address this disparity by mandating that employees of tribally controlled schools are eligible for the Federal Employees Retirement System and be eligible to participate in the Thrift Savings Plan, a tax-advantaged retirement savings and investment plan for federal employees.

The Ramah Navajo School Board, which operates a tribally controlled K-12 school in New Mexico, [endorses this bill](#), citing that this legislation “ensure[s] our Tribal educators are compensated fairly” and that addressing this disparity “will improve learning outcomes for our young people for generations to come.” These benefits will assist Tribally controlled schools in attracting the talent capable of educating the next generation of Native students at BIE-funded schools.

Please let us know if you would like our assistance in advocating for this bill or to learn more about opportunities to participate in efforts to advance this legislation in Congress. Support from Tribal Nations and lawmakers is paramount to passing H. R. 7781 into law.

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