

# The 2000 Legislative Briefing

SREB

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## *Summary*

Increases in SREB state budgets range from less than 4 percent in *Louisiana*, *North Carolina* and *West Virginia* to 12 percent in *Maryland*. States with large increases were *Delaware* (8.5 percent), *Georgia* (8.9 percent) and *South Carolina* (9.9 percent). Biennial increases in *Texas* and *Virginia* were 12.8 percent and 15.9 percent, respectively.

Several states are continuing the trend to provide tax relief. *Georgia* raised its homestead exemption to \$15,000 (from \$10,000) as part of the governor's plan to extend the exemption to \$50,000 of property value by 2008. *South Carolina* increased its homestead exemption to \$50,000 (from \$20,000) and eliminated 1 cent of sales tax on food. The Legislature intends to eliminate 1 cent each year until all 5 cents are eliminated. *South Carolina* also authorized a sales-tax exemption on purchases of clothing and school supplies during a three-day period every August; *Maryland* passed similar legislation. (Florida and Texas already have "sales-tax holidays.") During its biennial session in 1999, the *Texas* Legislature reduced property taxes and eliminated sales taxes on nonprescription drugs.

Tax plans were debated but not passed in *Kentucky* and *Tennessee*, though the Kentucky Legislature did pass a 6 percent tax on out-of-state telephone calls. Tennessee likely will debate changes to the tax system again in 2001. In *Louisiana*, two constitutional amendments will go before voters. These amendments exempt food and utilities from sales taxes and restructure income tax brackets. If both amendments are approved, other tax bills will take effect. The bills revise personal-income tax rates and temporarily re-enact a 1 cent sales tax on food and utilities that was suspended several years ago.

## *K-12 budgets*

General fund increases for elementary and secondary education ranged from 1.4 percent to 10.5 percent. Schools will receive increases of less than 4 percent in *Kentucky*, *Louisiana*, *Maryland*, *Tennessee* and *West Virginia*. Increases of more than 8 percent were approved in *Delaware*, *Florida*, *Oklahoma* and *South Carolina*. School budgets in *Alabama*, *Arkansas*, *Georgia*, *Mississippi* and *North Carolina* grew 4 percent to 8 percent. Biennial increases in *Texas* and *Virginia* were 17.4 percent and 13 percent, respectively.

## *Higher education budgets*

General fund increases for higher education budgets ranged from 1.7 percent to 15 percent. Increases of more than 8 percent were approved for four-year colleges and universities in *Florida* and *Maryland* and for two-year colleges in *Alabama*, *Maryland* and *North Carolina*. *Texas* and *Virginia* approved biennial increases of 11.3 percent and 17.8 percent, respectively.

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There were increases between 4 percent and 8 percent to budgets for colleges and universities in *Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Oklahoma, South Carolina* and *Tennessee*; for two-year colleges in *Florida*; and for four-year institutions in *Alabama* and *North Carolina*.

Budgets grew by less than 4 percent for colleges and universities in *Louisiana* and *West Virginia* and for four-year institutions in *Mississippi*. Mississippi's budget for two-year colleges declined by 3.4 percent.

Bills addressing higher education construction bonds were passed in a few states. In *Oklahoma*, an allocation of \$157.5 million for construction projects included \$30.8 million for higher education projects. *North Carolina* voters in November will determine whether there will be a \$3.1 billion bond for higher education construction projects.

## *Teacher salaries*

Teacher salaries continue to be a topic of discussion across the region because of teacher shortages in certain subjects and geographic areas, state efforts to tighten qualifications for teachers, and the low percentage of teacher education graduates who actually begin teaching. In states for which information is available, pay increases for 2000-01 range from about 2 percent in *Arkansas* (a minimum of \$700) and *West Virginia* (\$756) to about 10 percent (\$3,000) in *Oklahoma*. Oklahoma's increase is the first major increase there since 1995, the final year of the multiyear plan to raise the minimum salary by \$9,000 to \$24,060. Minimum pay now will be \$27,060.

*North Carolina* funded the final year of its plan to raise the average salary of teachers to the national average. Raises in 2000-01 will range from 2.5 percent to 13.8 percent and are expected to average 6.5 percent. *West Virginia* legislators approved the final step in a three-year effort to raise salaries by \$2,268.

Several states passed other legislation (in addition to budget actions) that addressed salary issues. No raises are expected in *Louisiana* or *Mississippi*, but Mississippi legislation provides a five-year plan to raise teachers' salaries by 29 percent beginning in 2001-02. In Louisiana, raises for teachers depend on constitutional amendments that will go before voters in November. Legislation in *Alabama* outlines a plan to raise the state's average salary for teachers to the national average.

In *Maryland* local districts determine raises through local collective bargaining. The Teacher Salary Challenge Program will provide 1 percent pay raises to teachers in districts that authorize cost-of-living increases of at least 4 percent. The goal is to increase teacher salaries by at least 10 percent over the next two years.

The Professional Development and Educator Accountability Act in *Delaware* created a new salary schedule that increases the salaries of beginning and experienced teachers. Beginning salaries will increase by up to 10 percent over three years. Teachers who gain additional skills and knowledge can earn supplements of 2 percent to 6 percent, and those who take on additional responsibilities can earn up to \$1,500 more per year. Teachers who earn national certification will receive annual bonuses of 12 percent. In addition, performance rewards to schools — which will be available for the first time in 2001-02 — may be used for salary supplements. Teachers who have failed the certification test and have had temporary certification for three or four years will receive 10 percent reductions in pay.

*Pay raises  
target areas  
of need*

States are funding new efforts to recruit and retain teachers. *Florida's* budget provides annual bonuses for teachers in the middle grades and high school who are certified in foreign languages, science, math, computer science or exceptional-student education. The budget also provides bonuses for high-performing teachers who remain in the state's lowest-performing schools. In *Georgia*, teachers in shortage areas (math, science, foreign language, exceptional education) will receive bonuses of up to one additional step on the state minimum-salary schedule. *Kentucky* legislation calls for a report on teacher pay and benefits by September 2001.

For more information, see SREB's *Teacher Salaries and State Priorities for Quality — A Vital Link* and *Focus on Teacher Salaries: What Teacher Salary Averages Don't Show*.

## Estimates of Salary and Tuition Increases for 2000-01

	Estimated teacher-salary increase	Estimated faculty-salary increase	Estimated tuition increase for in-state undergraduates
Alabama	1% to 5.5%	4% 2-year; NA 4-year	NA 2-year; 0 to 20% 4-year
Arkansas	Minimum \$700	3.5%	5.8% 2-year; 8% 4-year
Delaware	3% to 5%	3% to 4.1%	2.3% to 6.9%
Florida	NA	2.5%	5%
Georgia	3%	3%	3.8%
Kentucky	Minimum 2.2%	2% to 6%	3% to 7.5%
Louisiana	0	0	\$100 to \$250
Maryland	5%	7.5%	1.2% to 14.6%
Mississippi	0	0	6.6% 2-year; 3.3% to 3.9% 4-year
North Carolina	6.5%	4.2% + \$500 bonus	2.8% 2-year; 2.1% 4-year *
Oklahoma	10% (\$3,000)	3%	Less than 1%
South Carolina	4.6%	NA	NA
Tennessee	3.5%	3.5%	8% to 10%
Texas	NA	NA	NA 2-year; 5.3% 4-year
Virginia	2.4%	3% to 4.6%	0
West Virginia	\$756	NA	4.4% colleges; 4.1% universities

NA – Not available

\* The Board of Governors of the University of North Carolina authorized five institutions to grant specific campus-only tuition increases in addition to the across-the-board increase.

## *Faculty salary increases*

In states for which information is available, most pay raises for faculty will be between 3 percent and 5 percent. Information is not available for *Kentucky, South Carolina, Texas* and *West Virginia*; for four-year colleges and universities in *Alabama*; or for community colleges in *Florida*. No raises are expected in *Louisiana* or *Mississippi*.

Pay raises at *Florida's* four-year colleges and universities are expected to average 2.5 percent. Faculty will receive raises averaging 3 percent to 4 percent in *Arkansas, Delaware, Georgia, Oklahoma* and *Tennessee* and at two-year colleges in *Alabama*. In *Virginia*, faculty salary increases range by institution from 3 percent to 4.6 percent. These increases will allow each institution to maintain faculty salaries at the 60th percentile of its peer institutions. *North Carolina* faculty will receive raises of 4.2 percent and \$500 bonuses. Raises for faculty in *Maryland* should average 7.5 percent. In *Kentucky*, increases vary by institution and range from 2 percent to 6 percent.

For more information, see SREB's *Faculty Salaries in Colleges and Universities: Where Do SREB States Stand?*

## *In-state undergraduate tuition increases for 2000-01*

No general tuition increases for in-state undergraduates will be assessed in *Oklahoma* or *Virginia*, though institutions in Oklahoma are expected to raise some fees that will increase what students pay by less than 1 percent. In *Georgia*, students will pay about 3.8 percent more in 2000-01 because colleges and universities can assess a technology fee (up to \$75 at research institutions and up to \$38 at all other colleges and universities).

Two-year and four-year institutions in *Florida* report tuition increases of 5 percent, and four-year colleges and universities in *Texas* report increases of 5.3 percent. In *North Carolina*, the increases are 2.1 percent at community colleges and 2.8 percent at University of North Carolina institutions. *West Virginia's* universities will raise tuition by an average of 4.1 percent, while the increase at state colleges will average 4.4 percent. Increases at *Mississippi* two-year colleges average 6.6 percent.

In many SREB states, tuition increases vary by institution, and averages are not always available. Increases at four-year colleges and universities in *Alabama* range from about 4 percent to 20 percent. Two institutions will not raise tuition. Students at most Alabama colleges and universities will see increases between 5 percent and 9 percent. Increases in *Arkansas* average 6.6 percent and range from 2.7 percent to 21 percent. Ten of the state's 32 institutions report no increase. (All 10 of those institutions are two-year colleges.) In *Maryland*, increases at four-year colleges and universities range from 1.2 percent to 14.6 percent; two-thirds of the institutions will raise tuition between 3 percent and 5 percent.

*Delaware* students will pay between 2.3 percent and 6.9 percent more in 2000-01, and *Kentucky* students will pay 3 percent to 7.5 percent more. The *Tennessee* Higher Education Commission recommended 8 percent increases; actual increases are 8 percent to 10 percent. *Mississippi* four-year colleges and universities have set increases at between 3.3 percent and 3.9 percent.

*Increases in  
tuition vary*

Legislation in *Louisiana* allows technical colleges to raise tuition and required fees by up to \$100 per year; all other colleges and universities may increase fees by up to \$250 per year. Information on tuition increases is not available for two-year colleges in *Alabama*, *Maryland* and *Texas* or for institutions in *South Carolina*.

## *Actions affecting teachers*

States have stepped up efforts to increase accountability and improve student achievement. These actions — along with existing or estimated teacher shortages and state efforts to reduce class sizes and to provide additional support for children performing below their potential — have emphasized the need for quality teachers in every classroom.

Several states strengthened licensure requirements for teachers. *Virginia* legislation allows local school boards to issue a limited number of three-year licenses to candidates who do not meet the requirements for state-issued licenses. The intent is for these teachers to complete requirements for state licenses. *Georgia* now will require proficiency with computers for licensure and license renewal. In addition, tenure for new teachers is eliminated. *Delaware* legislation emphasizes the importance of professional development.

Beginning in 2002, *Florida* will use new licensure exams and will accept passing scores on new subject-area tests (in lieu of coursework in these subjects) for initial certification and for the addition of a subject area to a certificate. Parents will be notified when teachers are assigned classes in subjects for which they are not certified. *South Carolina's* bill on teacher quality addressed out-of-field teaching and middle school certification. *Kentucky* will define out-of-field teaching, review its policy on emergency certification and determine whether that policy increases out-of-field teaching.

Most SREB states offer incentives for teachers to pursue certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. *Georgia* will increase its bonuses for teachers who gain national certification to 10 percent (up from 5 percent). *Delaware* set a salary bonus of 12 percent annually; previously, nationally certified teachers were awarded \$1,500 per year. *Kentucky* set a goal of having at least one nationally certified teacher in every public school by 2020. *Virginia* joined other states, including *Florida* and *North Carolina*, in recognizing the licenses of nationally certified teachers from other states.

Several states are working to fill teacher shortages. *Kentucky* is starting an alternative route to teacher certification for military veterans. *Florida* deleted the requirement that retired military personnel must have served 20 years in order to achieve certification as teachers, and *Virginia* appropriated funds in the 2000-02 budget for an alternative certification program for military personnel. *Kentucky*, *Louisiana*, *Maryland*, *North Carolina*, *South Carolina*, *Tennessee* and *Texas* allow retired teachers to return to the classroom and retain their retirement benefits.

*Georgia* hopes to attract teachers of math, science, special education and foreign languages to schools where there are not enough qualified teachers. Those who agree to teach these subjects in these schools will receive up to one additional step on the salary schedule. *Florida* will begin providing bonuses to retain the top teachers in mathematics, science and computer science and to encourage high-performing teachers to remain in the state's lowest-performing schools. *Oklahoma* will establish a program to repay

## *States strengthen licensure requirements*

loans for teachers who majored in math or science, and *Virginia* expanded a scholarship loan program to encourage potential teachers to go into subject areas in which there are critical shortages of teachers.

For more information, see SREB's *Focus on Legislation Affecting Teachers in SREB States*; *Getting Beyond Talk: State Leadership Needed to Improve Teacher Quality*; and *A Middle Grades Message: A Well-qualified Teacher in Every Classroom Matters*.

## *Strengthening school and student accountability*

SREB states continue to focus on school and student accountability. *Delaware*, *Kentucky*, *Louisiana*, *South Carolina* and *West Virginia* increased funding for state testing programs. *Delaware* will delay until 2002 the student-retention requirements of its testing program. *Oklahoma* legislation delays until 2002-03 the implementation of the Biology I and Algebra I end-of-course tests; adds a nationally normed test at third grade to the state's testing program; and requires results from the testing program to be reported by ethnic group and gender for the state, districts and schools.

*Kentucky* is adding a college placement test to inform high school students about the mathematics standards at colleges and universities; this information is designed to encourage additional study and to reduce remediation. *Georgia's* new testing requirements will be supervised by its new office of accountability, which will develop and oversee accountability for systems for prekindergarten through postsecondary education.

Most SREB states allocate funds to reward high-performing and improving schools. *Florida* will increase funding for school rewards to \$60 million (from \$15 million). *Alabama* and *Louisiana* are initiating funding for such rewards, and *Delaware* will begin providing rewards in 2001-02. Accountability legislation in *Mississippi* calls for the state Board of Education to establish two programs: one to identify and reward high-performing and improving schools and one to assist low-performing schools.

Several states are providing low-performing schools or students with additional assistance. *Alabama* and *Florida* increased funding for this purpose. Alabama's funding will provide assistance to students who fail examinations for high school graduation. *Delaware* is calling for individual improvement plans for struggling students. A new initiative in *Virginia* will assist students in danger of failing the Algebra I end-of-course test and will help low-performing schools work to improve student achievement. *Maryland's* new effort will help students who are not performing at grade level.

*Louisiana* is decreasing funds for summer school and remedial instruction based on revised estimates of how many students need those services. New efforts include early intervention for young students and alternative education for students retained in fourth or eighth grade. *South Carolina* increased funding for summer school to \$18 million (up from \$10 million) and earmarked funds to assist low-performing school districts.

Two studies will address student achievement. In *Maryland*, a new task force will study disadvantaged students' readiness for college and will develop a strategy to ensure that these students have opportunities to graduate from colleges and universities. *North Carolina's* state Board of Education and a legislative study commission will investigate potential causes for lower achievement by minority and at-risk students.

More information is available in the following SREB reports: *Getting Results With Accountability: Rating Schools, Assisting Schools, Improving Schools; Student Achievement in the SREB States*; and *Reducing Dropout Rates*.

## *Education for young children*

Several states approved new efforts to improve children's readiness for school. *Alabama* created the Office of School Readiness to operate and manage a voluntary prekindergarten program. *Kentucky's* Early Childhood Development Authority will develop a state plan for funding priorities and programs and will establish administrative rules for coordinating and improving educational and health services for young children. *Maryland* created a commission on financing child-care and education programs for young children. In *Mississippi*, the Early Childhood Services Interagency Coordinating Council will ensure that state agencies work together to promote quality in all programs that serve preschool children.

*Maryland* legislation creates a program to develop and expand high-quality child care, education programs and support services for families. The state Board of Education in *Louisiana* will suggest ways to include funds for at-risk 4-year-olds in the school finance formula. *Mississippi* will allow graduates with degrees that emphasize child development to teach prekindergarten and kindergarten. *Delaware* will reimburse the tuition of teachers who take courses in early childhood education.

*Alabama, Delaware, Maryland* and *Virginia* will expand reading programs in the early grades. Legislation in *Tennessee* requires the Higher Education Commission, state Board of Education and Department of Education to cooperate in addressing reading and literacy issues. *Georgia* will implement early intervention programs for students who fall behind in first through third grades. The state also will phase in smaller classes in kindergarten through third grade by 2003-04. *South Carolina* is continuing to reduce class sizes in the early grades, is encouraging parent-friendly schools and is emphasizing the importance of parents' involvement in their children's education. Teachers in *Oklahoma* will receive stipends for attending a professional-development institute in reading.

For more information, see *SREB States Lead the Way: Getting Children Ready for the First Grade* and *Retention and Promotion: Finding Alternatives to Failure*.

*New efforts  
focus on  
readiness*

## *Higher education*

*Florida, Georgia, Tennessee* and *West Virginia* addressed governance and coordination of higher education. In *Florida*, revisions to the state governance structure and to the organization of the state budget figured prominently in discussions during the 2000 session. A new Florida Board of Education, effective in 2003, will comprise seven members appointed by the governor (the board currently is made up of the elected state Cabinet). This new board will appoint the commissioner of education (currently an elected position) and will be responsible for all levels of education (kindergarten through graduate school). Effective in 2003, the law abolishes the Department of Education, Board of Regents, State Board of Community Colleges and several other boards; and it creates governing boards for colleges and universities. The interim Education Governance Reorganization Transition Task Force will help with the changes.

*Changes to  
governance and  
coordination of  
higher education*

Members of *Georgia's* new coordinating council for education will include the chancellor of the University System and the chairmen of the Board of Regents, state Board of Education and Board of Technical and Adult Education. The coordinating council will oversee the new accountability office for prekindergarten through postsecondary education.

The *Tennessee* Higher Education Commission will have the authority to evaluate and approve new off-campus sites, where courses will be offered for credit. The commission also will work with the state Board of Education and the Department of Education to address reading and literacy issues.

*West Virginia* legislation abolishes the governing boards of the college and university systems, effective July 2000. It creates a commission for statewide policy development, also effective July 2000, and transfers governance responsibilities from the state to the institutions. An interim governing board will recommend legislation to complete the transfer. The bill also seeks to develop a system of independently accredited community colleges and technical colleges.

In other actions, *Virginia* created the Commonwealth Technology Research Fund with \$26 million in 2001-02. The fund will attract public and private research funding to the state and requires participating colleges and universities to provide matching funds. Legislation in *Florida* creates two new law schools that will offer classes beginning in fall 2003. The budget also sets aside funds to establish a medical school and to come up with a plan for a chiropractic school. *Maryland* and *Mississippi* created college savings programs. Both states already have prepaid tuition programs. Legislation in *Kentucky* creates a prepaid tuition program; that state already has a college savings plan. The *Tennessee* Higher Education Commission will develop a 60-hour core curriculum so that students at two-year colleges can transfer to public four-year colleges and universities as juniors without losing credits. The budget calls for a study to identify ways to measure the quality and effectiveness of the system of higher education.

Information on college effectiveness is available in SREB's *Linking Higher Education Performance Indicators to Goals*.

*State summaries of final legislative actions for the SREB region are available upon request. To order any publication listed in this Legislative Briefing, contact the Southern Regional Education Board. The reports and 2000 Final Legislative Actions also are available on SREB's Web site: [www.sreb.org](http://www.sreb.org).*