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Colo. Overhauls Teacher Tenure System

Denver

Gov. Bill Ritter on Thursday signed a bill that will require teachers to be judged on the performance of their students and put their jobs on the line if they fail.

Backers believe it will help the state win \$175 million in the second round of the Obama administration's Race to the Top. First round winners Tennessee and Delaware have moved to link teacher evaluations to student performance. Colorado's law also makes it possible for teachers to lose job protections after two straight years of bad evaluations.

Under the law, teachers will be evaluated each year, with at least half their ratings based on whether their students progressed during the school year. Teachers would only be able to get tenure job protections if their students have improved for three straight years.

Teachers who have tenure now would lose that status and the right to appeal a dismissal starting in 2015 if their students fail to improve two years in a row. However, teachers on the verge of losing tenure would first be able to appeal that second poor evaluation.

Principals would also be evaluated based on the progress of their students and the perform:

The bill won final passage last week on the final day of the legislative session after an emot Democrats against the state's largest teachers' union, a traditional ally. All Republicans vote

The Colorado Education Association skipped the bill signing ceremony at the Capitol, which speaking of the courage it took to pass the bill.

Ritter, a Democrat, still took time to thank CEA for their support for previous education reforms. He said the bill would help children by making sure there was an effective teacher in every classroom and he vowed the law would be used to help teachers improve, not punish them.

"We should never lose sight of the fact that what we do in this building is about people outside this building. In this case, it's children," said Ritter, flanked by the bill's bipartisan sponsors, including the main driver, freshman Democratic Sen. Mike Johnston.

The details about which tests and assessments teachers will be judged on will be determined by a council appointed by Ritter as part of the state's first Race to the Top entry. CEA, which has about 40,000 members, backed the council and creating a new evaluation system but objected to jumping ahead to laying out the consequences for failing now. At a time when Colorado is cutting school spending by about \$245 million and laying off administrators, it also fears there isn't enough time or money to do thoughtful evaluations.

In a statement, union president Beverly Ingle said the group would help make the law work through its work on the council, which includes three CEA teachers.

"CEA and its members want a good evaluation system that supports teachers and helps the We are committed to helping our students achieve. Nothing is more important," she said.

The Colorado affiliate of the American Federation of Teachers, which represents about 3,000

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