

# NEWS

from the

## Louisiana Federation of Teachers

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### **SB 90 by Sen. Gray Evans and HB 689 by Representative Carter Peterson**

#### **Statement by Alison Ocmund, Legislative Director, Louisiana Federation of Teachers**

Thank you for coming here today. I want to speak very briefly about two recent studies published by the American Federation of Teachers. Copies of the reports are on discs that we have prepared for you.

A few months ago, the AFT published a nationwide school infrastructure needs survey. The numbers that it produced were quite frankly shocking. Research indicated that across the 50 states, there is a need for approximately \$254.6 billion for maintaining existing schools – including deferred maintenance, renovations and retrofitting for the newest technology – and building new schools to fit the requirements of modern educational technology.

In Louisiana alone, AFT found that the need approaches \$7.3 billion. That estimate was a deliberately conservative one. Since our state has made no effort to ascertain the true infrastructure need, the Louisiana estimate was based on extrapolation of available data. Researchers wanted to be sure they did not overestimate the cost.

We know that we are in the ballpark with the \$7.3 billion estimate, but we need a complete statewide analysis in order to be absolutely accurate about the true need. One of the virtues of this legislation is that, for the first time, we will have a facilities authority to conduct that survey.

When we consider the enormity of the problem, it is obvious that very few, if any, school systems have the resources to provide the kind of schools that all of our children deserve. We can no longer assume that building and maintaining schools is solely a local issue. The state and the federal government must play a role in replacing our crumbling schools.

The second study in your packet is the AFT's road map to green and sustainable schools. Once we have a mechanism to improve our infrastructure, it is important to look at the kind of schools that we want to give our children.

We know that green, environmentally sustainable schools save money. Energy-efficient buildings keep skyrocketing energy costs in check, which in turn frees money for academic and student support services. But "going green" is about much more than just saving money: Green schools mean healthier environments for students and staff. Research shows that better environmental quality yields more productive human beings and greater academic achievement for all students.

Passage of these bills will make it possible for Louisiana to begin providing those schools for our children.

If you travel the state today, you will see school after school that does not meet even minimal standards. Ask yourselves if you would want to spend up to eight hours a day working under the conditions we impose on our children. If the answer is no, then you can understand why passage of these bills, SB 90 by Sen. Gray Evans and HB 689 by Representative Carter Peterson, is so important.