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## Editor's Notebook

### **Bravo!**

Don't let the dissembling pols fool you. Senator Stratton Taylor is responsible for the \$3,000 teacher pay hike effective July 1.

The term-limited Claremore Democrat led a quiet but determined revolt among Senate Democrats, angry that their leadership would let House Republicans again write the budget—for the rich, against labor and for Gov. Brad Henry's sorry \$1,200 pay hike for teachers.

In his last major legislative initiative, Senate President Pro Tempore Emeritus Taylor won passage of the \$3,000 across-the-board pay raise for every Oklahoma public school teacher.

No, it didn't go through the formula. That stupidity happened last year and thousands of teachers got nothing or as little as \$200.

"I am extremely proud to have been the architect of the most significant pay increase for teachers in seven years," said Taylor, D-Claremore. "Oklahoma's teachers are among the best trained and lowest paid in the country. We must do all we can to raise teacher pay in our state to keep our high quality educators in Oklahoma."

Taylor is chairman of the Senate Appropriations Sub-Committee on Education and proposed the \$3,000 pay raise in January as the key plank in the education agenda of the Democratic majority in the Senate.

"Others proposed much smaller increases in teacher pay," Taylor said. "I pushed for the \$3,000 raise for every teacher because I believe that if Oklahoma is ever going to reach the regional average in teacher pay we have to do something significant."

"This is a year of record revenues. We had a unique opportunity and today the Legislature has taken a bold step ..."

Oklahoma teachers are not only 50th in pay, they're dead last in the region. Henry's promise to raise them to the regional average was a hollow promise—something Taylor vowed was going to happen despite Henry's budget.

Taylor said it was the unwavering resolve of Democrats in both the House and Senate that made the \$3,000 pay raise for teachers a reality.

Other plans called for an average pay raise of \$3,000 for state teachers but would not have guaranteed that all teachers received a salary increase.

"While some were willing to wink and tell teachers they were getting a \$3,000 pay raise when many of them would have actually received less, I believed it was important to fully fund and mandate a \$3,000 across-the-board salary increase for every teacher," Taylor said.

The teacher pay raise measure was the last bill Taylor authored and



voted for in his 28-years career in the Legislature. Taylor will leave office at the end of the year due to term limits.

He was this year's premier legislator—not in the headlines, not at press conferences, not fighting it out in committee or on the Senate floor. He simply took the leadership reins in a confidential meeting of Democratic senators and they backed him 100 percent.

As a result, it was the Senate this year—not Henry, not Hiett, but the Democratic Senate majority that wrote the budget, infuriating Hiett, the arm pit of the Republican Party and a toady for the reactionary Stat Chamber.

Bravo Stratton Taylor! Bravo!