

ATTORNEY GENERAL  
2012 BALLOT EXPLANATION  
REFERRED LAW 16

Title: An education reform act to establish a teacher scholarship program; create a program for math and science teacher bonuses; create a program for teacher merit bonuses; mandate a uniform teacher and principal evaluation system; and eliminate state requirements for teacher tenure.

Explanation:

Referred Law 16 is an education reform act with five key components. First, it establishes a scholarship program for eligible college students who commit to teach in South Dakota in critical need subject areas.

Second, the referred law creates a program to provide state-funded annual bonuses for eligible math and science teachers.

Third, the referred law develops a separate “Top Teachers” bonus program. This program provides annual state-funded merit bonuses for up to 20% of each school district’s full-time certified teachers, as awarded by the local school boards. Alternatively, a school board may enact its own program for teacher bonuses, using these state-provided funds. A school board may opt out of these merit bonus programs altogether, resulting in re-allocation of its merit bonus funds to other participating school districts.

Fourth, the referred law mandates a uniform statewide system for evaluating teachers and principals, including a rating system.

Fifth, the referred law eliminates state requirements for continuing contracts (“tenure”) for teachers who do not achieve tenure by July 1, 2016. School boards may, in their discretion, choose to offer continuing contracts to non-tenured teachers.

A vote “Yes” is to enact the education reform act.

A vote “No” is against the referred law.