

## Veto No. 1984-7

SB 1346

December 19, 1984

To the Honorable, the Senate  
of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania:

I have on my desk for review Senate Bill 1346, Printer's No.2476, which will prohibit the State Board of Education from implementing continuing education requirements for Pennsylvania elementary and secondary school teachers. This special interest legislation would undo one of our efforts to improve the quality of education in Pennsylvania.

In October of last year, I called upon the General Assembly, the State Board of Education and the Department of Education to enact an agenda of initiatives to promote excellence in Pennsylvania public schools. This agenda, which will commit more than \$100 million in added funds for public education by 1987, called for more comprehensive curriculum requirements for high school graduation, a competency testing program for public school students designed to identify those in need of remedial instruction, a mandatory new instructional program for students identified as having deficiencies in basic reading and math skills, tougher initial certification requirements for new teachers and continuing education requirements designed to keep Pennsylvania school teachers up-to-date regarding educational techniques.

I am very pleased that in the fourteen months since I announced this Agenda for Excellence we have succeeded in implementing each major initiative. The State Board of Education has adopted regulations increasing high school graduation requirements. The Department of Education is currently implementing a new competency testing program. The General Assembly has funded a major new remedial education program, and the Board of Education in September established a new teacher training, certification and continuing education program.

Continuing education requirements for elementary and secondary school teachers are a vital component of our overall Agenda for Excellence. Extensive research has demonstrated that in-service and continuing professional education improves a teacher's effectiveness. Continuing education has been demonstrated to expand a teacher's knowledge about the methods of effective instruction, improve a teacher's ability to communicate successfully with students, and result in significant achievement gains in the classroom. Unfortunately, far too few of our teachers today receive adequate continuing education. Between 1980 and 1983, fewer than 20% of science teachers, 10% of physics and environmental science teachers and 5% of mathematics teachers had any updating of their training. In a time in which these fields are changing rapidly, it is unlikely that those who are teaching our children would be adequately prepared if they do not endeavor to keep up with their fields of study. In a state which currently requires continuing education for the licen-

sure of accountants, optometrists, podiatrists, veterinarians and nursing home administrators, it is imperative that we also require elementary and secondary teachers to maintain up-to-date knowledge regarding their profession.

The regulation adopted in September 1984 imposes a very modest continuing education requirement. All teachers certified after June 1987 will be required to obtain six credits of professional study every five years to keep their teaching certificates active. The regulation also permits the individual teacher to select whatever continuing education program best contributes to his or her professional development. Approved continuing education programs may either be offered at the collegiate level or through in-service training. The continuing education program was developed following a thorough and comprehensive process which involved members of the public, school boards, school administrators, teachers and the professional education community.

The continuing education program was developed by the State Board of Education in consultation with the Council on Higher Education, the Coalition to Improve Education, members of the General Assembly, the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Universities and the Department of Education. Public hearings regarding the proposal were also held, and the proposal was approved by the House and Senate Education Committees and the Independent Regulatory Review Commission. The successful adoption of a continuing education program in September represented the culmination of a long, difficult, thorough and thoughtful period of deliberation and evaluation.

Continuing education is essential to achieving higher quality instruction in our schools. This regulation represents an important first step towards keeping Pennsylvania's teachers up-to-date and informed. Together with local school districts, teachers organizations and the Department of Education, I am confident that the State Board of Education will continue to work to improve our teacher certification process. No rational public purpose is served, however, by enacting legislation such as Senate Bill 1346, which not only blocks implementation of even a modest continuing education program, but further prohibits the Board of Education from requiring any continuing education for teachers after their six-year probationary period.

The facts of the matter are that teachers, like students, can and should learn; can improve their techniques and their knowledge of subject matter. This Administration believes that the continuing professional development requirements of Chapter 49 will help to improve the quality of teaching in Pennsylvania, will help to keep teachers interested and interesting, and will, in the long run, contribute to increased achievement by Pennsylvania students. Groups of concerned parents, school boards, the State Association of School Administrators and the State Association of School Boards have expressed strong agreement.

In view of the fact that the future of the quality of education to our students is at stake, I cannot believe that support for this bill by the narrowly-based lobbying group at the Pennsylvania State Education Association (PSEA) headquarters in Harrisburg was really representative of the view of the vast majority of conscientious teachers throughout the Commonwealth who place the welfare of their pupils ahead of their own personal interest and convenience.

I have concluded that this legislation will seriously impede our efforts to improve the quality of public education. Pursuant to the provisions of the Constitution of Pennsylvania, therefore, I hereby disapprove Senate Bill 1346, Printer's No.2476; and publicly proclaim and file my objection to this legislation with the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

DICK THORNBURGH