



CHARLIE CRIST
GOVERNOR

June 10, 2008

Secretary Kurt S. Browning
Secretary of State
Florida Department of State
R. A. Gray Building
500 South Bronough Street
Tallahassee, Florida 32399

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DEPARTMENT OF STATE
TALLAHASSEE, FLORIDA

FILED

Dear Secretary Browning:

By the authority vested in me as Governor of Florida, under the provisions of Article III, Section 8, of the Constitution of Florida, I do hereby transmit Committee Substitute for House Bill 5083, with my signature, enacted during the 40th Session of the Legislature convened under the Constitution of 1968, and entitled:

An act relating to education ...

Committee Substitute for House Bill 5083 amends several statutory provisions necessary to conform statutes with the General Appropriations Act for the 2008-2009 fiscal year. I appreciate that the Legislature protected public school classrooms from the effects of budget reductions.

I especially appreciate the Legislature extending the application deadline for school districts to participate in the Merit Award Program. High-performing teachers deserve financial recognition for their hard work. Reopening the application process should make these awards available to additional outstanding teachers throughout Florida.

However, the revisions to the Dale Hickam Excellent Teaching Program are disappointing. The Program provides monetary incentives for teachers to attain national certification. While I appreciate the Legislature's effort to maintain the mentoring funds for these teachers, the loss of funding for 90 percent of the application fee and \$150 for portfolio preparation serve to limit new participants to those who can afford the \$2,500 to apply. The reclassification of the awards as "bonuses" is a grave disservice, especially to participating teachers who are approaching retirement and for whom the award factors into their retirement calculation. I look forward to working with the Legislature during the 2009 Legislative Session to reinstate these components of the Program.

I appreciate the consensus built by legislative leadership to limit budget reductions to public schools and allow school districts the maximum flexibility to allocate resources. For these reasons, I sign Committee Substitute for House Bill 5083 into law.

Sincerely,

Charlie Crist