

March 6, 2019

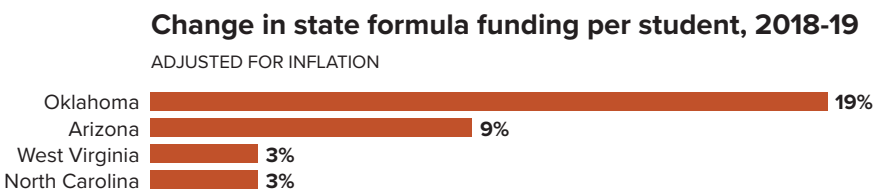
Teacher Strikes Restore Funding in Some of the Hardest-Hit States

BY TUCKER DOHERTY, POLITICO PRO DATAPOINT

A new report by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities finds that teacher strikes and other demonstrations in 2018 led to major boosts to education funding in several states, helping to reverse a decline in state support that occurred after the Great Recession.

While federal aid from the 2009 economic stimulus law helped mitigate cuts in state funding for several years, federal funding had faded by 2013 — leaving school districts across the country struggling to operate with reduced state and local revenues. In most states, school funding only reached its pre-recession level beginning in 2016, while teacher salaries continued to lag behind.

In 2018, major teacher strikes and demonstrations occurred in six states that had cut teacher salaries by more than 5 percent since 2009. Teacher demands included higher pay, more support staff and greater financial resources in future state budgets. In at least four of these states, state lawmakers ultimately passed major boosts to “formula funding” for the 2019 fiscal year — the basic amount allocated to each school district based on student population counts.



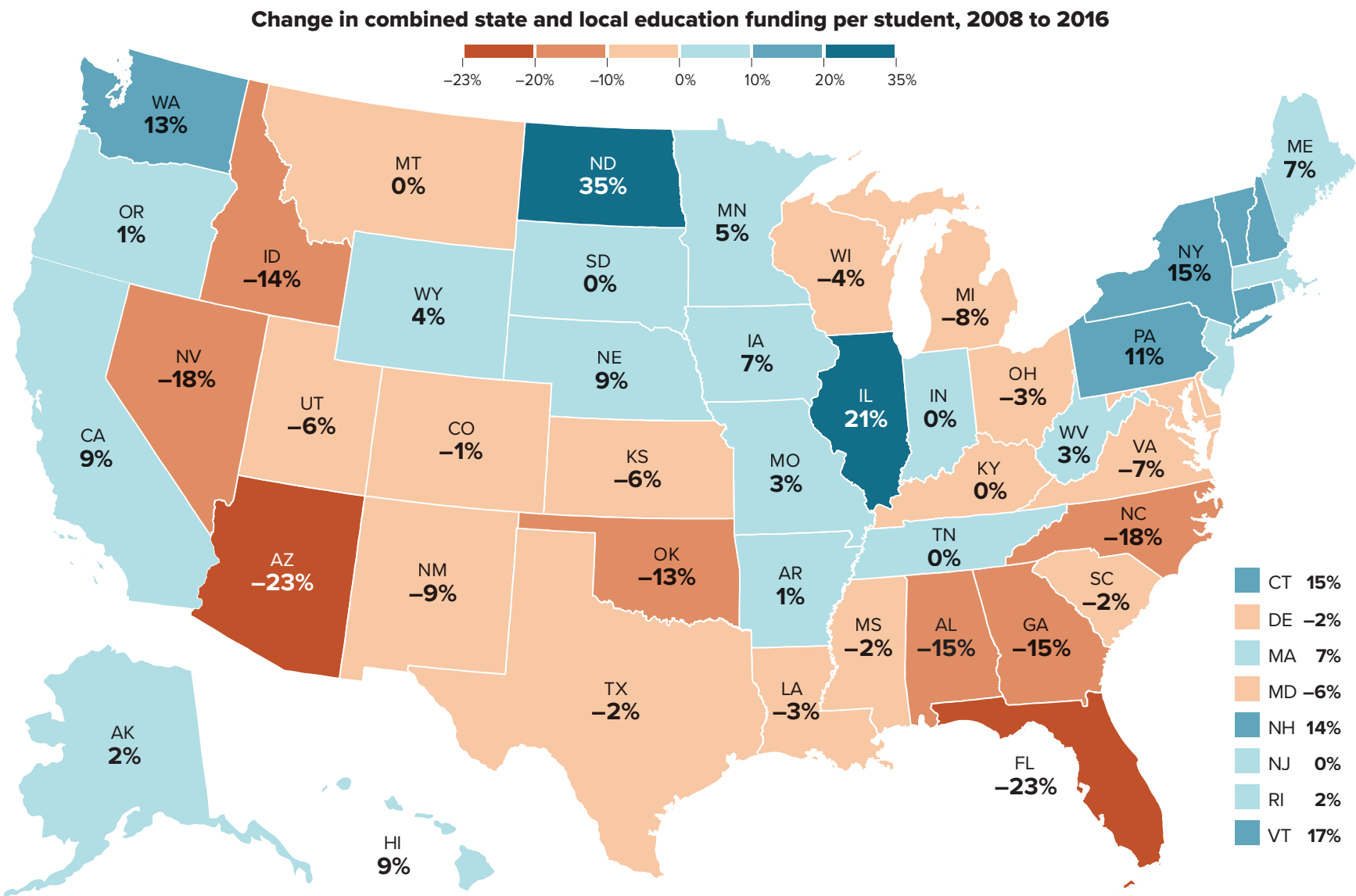
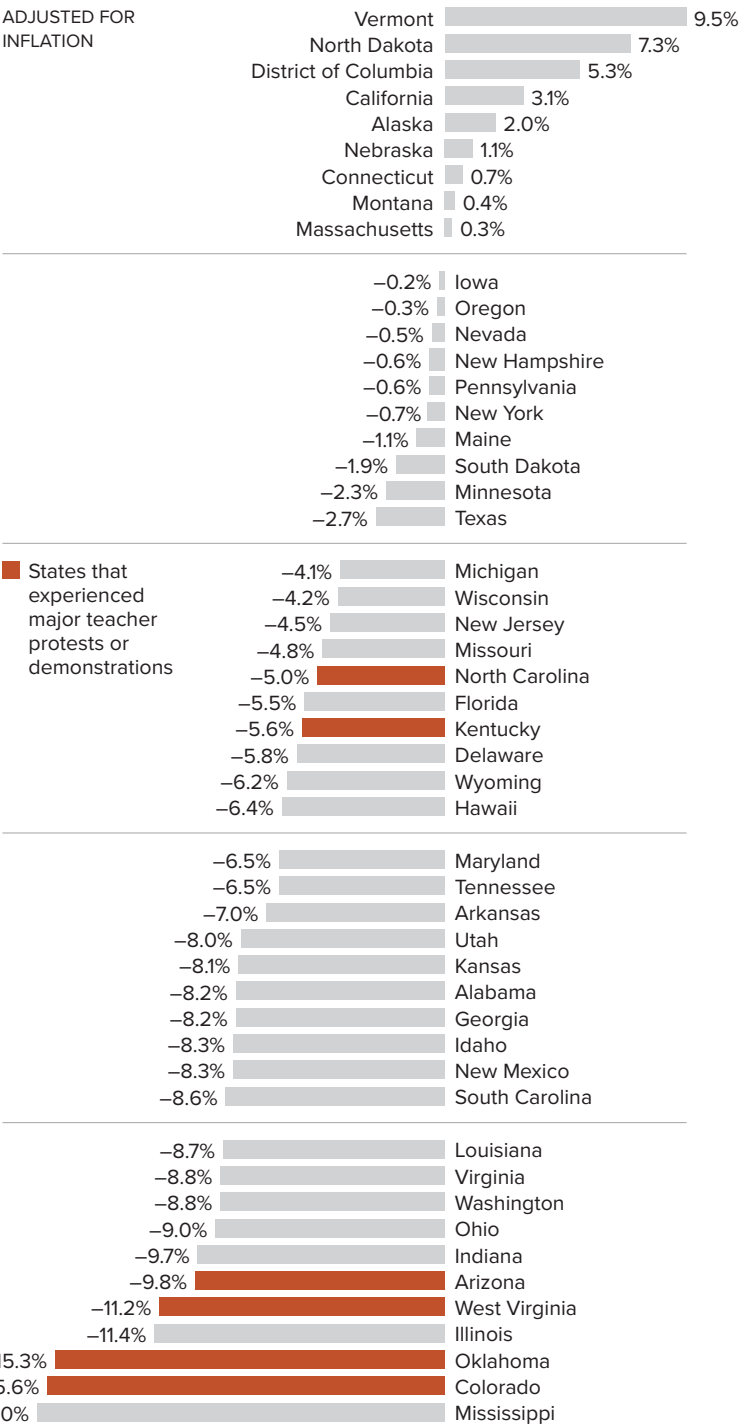
However, according to the report, several of the deals struck to end teacher strikes depend on unreliable revenue sources that could leave states vulnerable to budgetary back-tracking in future years.

In Arizona, Gov. Doug Ducey (R) committed to a three-year salary increase without substantial new revenues to offset the cost, relying instead on optimistic budget assumptions and one-time funding shifts, according to the authors.

North Carolina’s school spending increase was similarly passed without significant accompanying revenue increases. Income tax cuts implemented in January 2019 will leave the state with a \$1.2 billion structural shortfall in 2020.

In Oklahoma, pay increases for teachers and other public employees were paid with increases to cigarette, gasoline and oil extraction taxes — funding sources that will likely fail to keep pace with revenue needs as consumers change habits and possibly switch to more fuel-efficient vehicles.

Change in K-12 teacher salaries, 2009 to 2017



Source: Michael Leachman and Eric Figueroa, “K-12 school funding up in most 2018 teacher-protest states, but still well below decade ago,” Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

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