

RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL

No. 271

Approved May 12, 2000

WHEREAS, Preempting a growing national movement to impose tougher standards on teachers, the American Federation of Teachers, the nation's second-largest teachers union, will propose a national test and rigorous new standards for those who want to become teachers, and

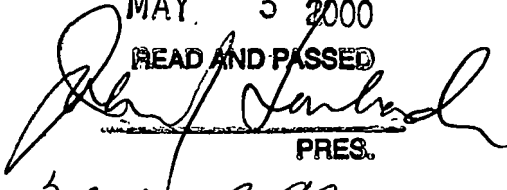
WHEREAS, The proposal, a departure from traditional union opposition to increased teacher testing, comes amid heightened worries from educators, parents and politicians about the declining quality of the nation's teaching force and those entering it, and

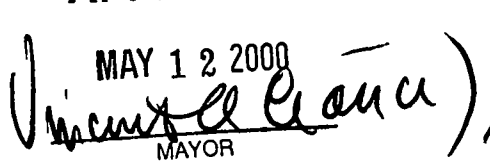
WHEREAS, About a third of all teachers lack a major or minor in the subjects they teach, meaning that about four million children every year learn math from someone who may not have taken a math class since high school. While most states have teacher tests, most require only the equivalent of a high school education to pass, in part because unions have blocked efforts to set the bar higher, and

WHEREAS, Some two million teachers are due to be hired or replaced nationwide over the next decade, with many states struggling to find enough qualified people to lead their classrooms, and

WHEREAS, The union said it wanted to take advantage of that opportunity and was making its recommendations after two years of studying teacher preparation programs. The proposal would not affect current members, and

WHEREAS, Unions have long said that tests are a poor measure of the gifts that make a good teacher. But ultimately, tests and tougher standards can give the teaching profession the same rigor, and the same status, that board and bar exams give doctors and lawyers. With schools in almost every state subjecting students to tougher tests, it only makes sense to demand the same of teachers, and

CITY COUNCIL
MAY 3 2000
READ AND PASSED

PRES.
Michael R. Clement
CLERK

APPROVED
MAY 12 2000

MAYOR

Council President Lombardi

WHEREAS, While the union proposal comes late to the bid for better teachers, it also adds a crucial voice to the lawmakers and parents who have called for reforms. Any attempt to adopt such a national program will be bucking a long tradition of strong local control over education, and

WHEREAS, Rhode Island does give teachers a certification exam, but because of an amendment passed by the General Assembly in 1991, teachers who fail it can teach anyway. The union argues that teachers should pass a competency test if they expect to be treated like professionals, and

WHEREAS, Under the 1991 amendment, any teacher who fails the exam undergoes an annual job evaluation by the local school district for three years. However, that teacher does not have to pass the exam at the end of the three years, and

WHEREAS, The amendment, sponsored by former State Representative Harold Metts, of Providence, was designed to ensure that minorities were not excluded from the teaching profession because of language or cultural barriers. At the time, leaders of the minority community charged that the National Teacher Exam discriminated against minorities because some of the questions required cultural knowledge that had nothing to do with mastery of a specific subject, and

WHEREAS, A recent survey by the State Department of Education showed that during the 1998-99 school year, 90 teachers out of approximately 8,500 statewide had not passed the exam.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, That the Providence City Council do hereby support the American Federation of Teachers proposal for a national test and rigorous new standards for those who want to become teachers.