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### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Contract Bill Decision a Win for Public Education**

*VEA President Dr. Kitty Boitnott issued the following statement on the defeat of HB 576:*

The defeat of this poorly conceived bill is a victory for public educators and students. And the bipartisan vote shows that the facts are on our side, as the 23 Senators confirmed.

Virginia has much work to do to make sure the best teachers are in front of students across the state. But this bill would have had the opposite effect—it would have made it easier to arbitrarily fire teachers while doing little to enhance the support all teachers need to be successful.

Arguments that the Governor and others made in support of HB 576 were without merit. Teachers can be—and are—dismissed every year for underperformance. But they are afforded the opportunity of a hearing and proof of good cause. The biggest change that HB 576 would have made would be to make it easier to dismiss teachers for specious reasons, such as refusing to change a star athlete's grade, or for speaking out at a school board meeting.

Now is not the time to make Virginia a less attractive place to teach. Our average salaries currently trail the national average by \$7,000, ranking us 31<sup>st</sup>. Teachers' retirement benefits are under attack. HB 576, by gutting the limited job security that our teachers do have, would surely have made it harder for the state to recruit the best and brightest into our classrooms. Teachers that might have come to Virginia would opt for other states with better pay and working conditions.

We call on Governor McDonnell to turn his attention to the things that really matter for kids—smaller class sizes, better training and professional learning opportunities for teachers, and up-to-date textbooks and instructional technologies.