



State Senate OKs bill forcing teachers, public employees to pay at least 20% of health care premiums

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DETROIT FREE PRESS LANSING BUREAU

4:08 PM, May. 18, 2011|

Public school and local government employees would pay at least 20% of their health insurance premiums under a bill passed overwhelmingly today by the state senate.

The requirement would take effect Jan. 1. Current labor contracts would remain in force until they expire.

The law would not affect state and university employees unless voters approved a constitutional amendment. The Senate also voted along party lines to place that question on a ballot.

Under the Senate bill, public employers would pay no more than 80% of health insurance premiums for employees. The remaining 20% cost would be spread among the employees however they and their employer agree.

The vote was 25-13, with only one Republican voting no, Sen. Tom Casperson of Escanaba.

Gov. Rick Snyder has called for such a limit as well.

Republicans said the bill would create true cost containment reform.

Democrats called it an attack on collective bargaining rights that would most affect young, newly hired school teachers who have low salaries but depend on generous health benefits.

"This is a reform. These are times when we have to make changes that are not always easy," said Sen. Mark Jansen, R-Gaines Township.

But Sen. Coleman Young II, D-Detroit, said the state has "no business" setting down rules for local [employee benefits](#).

"I don't need to be telling my mayor how to do his job," Young said.

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