



ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE REPORT (95-17)

LEGISLATURE TO RETURN ON MONDAY

Members of the Illinois General Assembly left Springfield today (Friday) and will return to the Capitol on Monday afternoon; the legislative sessions scheduled for Saturday and Sunday were cancelled. Though the scheduled adjournment date is Thursday, May 31, no budget deal has yet been struck and that deadline could be in jeopardy. If the session continues into June, a 3/5 vote is needed to pass the budget and the minority party gains power. Though the Democrats control the Senate with enough members to pass a budget – even with a 3/5 majority – Republican votes would be needed to pass a bill in the House. This would certainly add a new dynamic to budget talks and spending priorities.

For the first time this session, **Governor Rod Blagojevich, House Speaker Michael Madigan, and Senate President Emil Jones, Jr.** met this week to discuss the fiscal year 2008 budget. The House has taken the Governor's Gross Receipts Tax (GRT) off of the table and the Governor, continuing his mantra of vetoing any bill that would increase either the income or sales tax, has taken HB 750 off of the table. The leaders now are looking for a compromise budget plan that could find new revenues from natural revenue growth, the elimination of certain corporate tax credits, a possible "alternative minimum tax" for corporations, and an expansion of casino gaming.

HOUSE APPROVES DRIVERS' LICENSE CHANGES

The House of Representatives Wednesday approved a bill to add tough new standards for drivers' education. **SB 172 (Cullerton, D-Chicago)**, the result of a task force headed by **Secretary of State Jesse White**, will be sent to the Governor for consideration.

The bill makes several significant changes, including:

- requires students to hold an instruction permit for 9 months (instead of the current 3 months);
- extends the use of the graduated license for those over 18 years old under certain circumstances;
- imposes a curfew for driving with a permit – not after 10:00 p.m. Sunday-Thursday and not after 11:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday;
- changes the curfews for drivers who drive on a graduated license – not after 10:00 p.m. Sunday-Thursday and not after 11:00 p.m. Friday and Saturday; and
- limits the number of passengers allowed in a vehicle driven by a newly licensed driver to one person under the age of 20 (and provides that a citation may be given to, not only the driver in this case, but to those extra passengers under the age of 20).

The bill makes changes that will increase the cost of school districts that provide drivers' education. It deletes the provisions that allow school districts to use proficiency examinations for practice driving and prohibits the use of simulators. Six hours of driving – in a car with an instructor – would be required. In both the Senate and House, the Alliance raised concerns about the cost of these provisions. Both the bill sponsor and the Secretary of State have stated that they will push for added appropriations from the State Board of Education to be distributed to school districts to cover the extra costs that will be incurred.

OTHER BILLS HEADED TO THE GOVERNOR

The following bills have been approved by both the Senate and the House of Representatives and will be sent to the Governor for consideration:

SB 397 (Demuzio) is an ISBE initiative requiring textbook publishers to include with any printed textbook the accessible electronic file set of contracted printed material for conversion to accessible format for students with disabilities.

SB 398 (Demuzio) makes changes in reimbursement allowances for the costs of educating a disabled student who is placed residentially by the State.

SB 424 (Delgado) provides that if a pupil successfully completes one or more of the courses required as a prerequisite to receiving a high school diploma before entering high school, then the pupil shall be given high school credit for that course, under certain conditions.

SB 441 (Hultgren) creates the offense of failure to stop for or yield the right-of-way to a pedestrian in a crosswalk in a school zone. It provides that a first violation is a petty offense with a minimum fine of \$150 and a second or subsequent violation is a petty offense with a minimum fine of \$300.

SB 538 (Raoul) encourages school boards to allow community organizations to use school facilities during non-school hours and if such use is allowed, the board must adopt a formal policy governing such use.

HB 1238 (Watson) allows a strobe lamp on a school bus to be lighted at any time when the bus is being used as a school bus with a pupil on board.

BILL APPROVED FOR LOCAL CONSTRUCTION MONEY

A bill was approved that could help school districts find local funding for school construction. **SB 835 (Jacobs, D-Moline)** would allow a county board to place a question on the ballot to implement a sales tax for distribution to school districts within the county who's voters approve the measure for school district facility needs. The contents, originally contained in **HB 410 (Verschoore, D-Milan)**, were amended onto SB 835 in the Senate Local Government Committee and the amended bill was approved by the full Senate. The bill will be heard in the House Revenue Committee next week.

Besides allowing the county board to put the sales tax question on the ballot, it authorizes school boards that represent at least 51% of the student enrollment within the county to adopt a resolution to require the county to certify the referendum question of imposing the tax. It establishes procedures for regional superintendents of schools to distribute the tax proceeds to school districts on an enrollment basis and requires school districts to deposit the proceeds in a special school facility occupation tax fund and use those moneys only for school-facility purposes.

Alliance Legislative Reports:
Bill Text/Status: Illinois General Assembly

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