



ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE REPORT (95-20)

LEGISLATURE FAILS TO APPROVE BUDGET

The deadline for adjournment of the Illinois General Assembly has come and gone, but there is still no Fiscal Year 2008 budget. Though the House of Representatives passed a budget bill Wednesday night (see Alliance Legislative Report 95-19 at www.iasb.com/files/alr-9519.htm), no action has been taken in the Senate. No agreement could be reached among the majority leadership in the House and Senate and the Governor as to revenue sources (new taxes, closing of tax loopholes, gaming money, etc.) or to the spending priorities (education, health care, infrastructure, etc.). There are also many legislators saying that they will not vote for any budget bill until legislation is passed regarding the utility rate issue.

According to the Illinois Constitution, “A bill passed after May 31 shall not become effective prior to June 1 of the next calendar year unless the General Assembly by the vote of three-fifths of the members elected to each house provides for an earlier effective date”. Since a budget bill would have to be effective for the 2008 fiscal year – beginning July 1, 2007 – any budget bill would require a 3/5 vote in both chambers instead of a majority vote. Though the Democrats have enough votes in the Senate to achieve the 3/5 threshold, Republican votes would be necessary in the House. This change will give House Minority Leader Tom Cross a seat at the budget negotiating table.

House Speaker Michael J. Madigan issued a new session schedule yesterday that includes legislative session days every week through the end of June. The House is scheduled to return to Springfield next Tuesday; the Senate is expected to do the same. The Governor, however, could call legislators back to work before that if he decides to call a special legislative session.

GAMING BILL APPROVED BY SENATE

The Senate Thursday night approved a bill that would expand casino gaming in the State and would reportedly bring in billions of dollars for the budget. **HB 25 (Lang, D-Chicago)** would establish three more casino riverboat licenses (for Lake County, near O’Hare airport, and south of Chicago near the Indiana border), plus a new casino for the City of Chicago. Some of the revenues would be earmarked for capital projects, including school construction.

The bill now goes to the House of Representatives where its fate is uncertain. Speaker Madigan has indicated that there is not much support in his caucus for such a large expansion of gambling. Without further talk of the Governor’s revenue sources (the Gross Receipts Tax) or other general tax increases, it is likely that any substantial new funding for public education would come from a gaming bill.

SUPPLEMENTAL APPROPRIATION BILL APPROVED

The Senate Thursday night approved a supplemental appropriations bill that included \$150 million in school construction funds for the 24 school districts that have been waiting for their grants from the school construction grant program since 2003. “Supplemental appropriations” add money to the current fiscal year budget, FY ’07, and have no bearing on the FY ’08 budget currently being negotiated. **SB 241 (Trotter, D-Chicago)** will be sent to the Governor for consideration. The bill also happens to include funding for the pay raises for members of the legislature.

BILL ACTION FROM THURSDAY

The following bills were approved and will be sent to the Governor for consideration:

SB 446 (Martinez) makes changes to the “Grow Your Own Teacher” education act.

SB 543 (Raoul) requires parents of a child who is below the compulsory school age (age 7) and who is enrolled in kindergarten in a public school to cause the child to attend the public school.

SB 641 (Demuzio) requires all children enrolling in kindergarten, and any student enrolling in a public or private school for the first time, to have an eye examination. The child shall present proof of having been examined within the previous year before October 15th of the school year or the school may hold the child's report card until one of the following occurs: (i) the child presents proof of a completed eye examination or (ii) the child presents proof that an eye examination will take place within 60 days after October 15th. The bill requires the Department of Public Health to establish a waiver for children who show an undue burden or a lack of access to an eligible physician and requires every school to report to the ISBE by June 30 the number of children who have received the required eye examination.

SB 841 (Munoz) requires the ISBE to create a program to pay the fees to the College Board for Advanced Placement for public schools where at least 40% of students qualify for free or reduced-price lunches.

SB 1165 (Demuzio) is an ISBE initiative to repeal several obsolete provisions in the School Code and requires the ISBE to annually assemble data reported by district superintendents relating to the number of high school students in the educational service region who are enrolled in accredited courses at a community college.

SB 1463 (Lightford) amends the Silent Reflection and Student Prayer Act to require a teacher to observe a brief period of silence at the opening of every school day with the participation of all pupils assembled.

SB 1472 (Kotowski) creates the Internet Safety Education Act to inform and protect students from inappropriate or illegal communications and solicitation and to require school districts to provide education about Internet threats and risks.

SB 1557 (Frerichs) requires a driver education course to include classroom instruction on distracted driving as a major traffic safety issue.

SB 1702 (Lightford) requires a school district to have a policy before it collects any biometric information (fingerprints, retina scans, etc.) from students and that the policy must require written permission from the students' parents before collecting the information.

HB 574 (Munson) creates a Social Security Number Protection Task Force to explore the technical and procedural changes that are needed in order to implement a unique identification number system to replace the use of social security numbers by State and local government agencies. The bill was amended, as requested by the Alliance, to add a school administrator to the task force.