



ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE REPORT (98-50)

LEGISLATURE CLOSE TO ADJOURNMENT

The Illinois General Assembly is on track to meet its May 31 scheduled adjournment date as the House of Representatives finished its business early Friday evening and the Senate will complete its agenda late tonight (Friday) or early Saturday. The Senate approved the appropriations bills Friday afternoon and is working on a few remaining legislative issues.

The Fiscal Year 2015 budget, which does not include revenues from extension of the current income tax rates, was approved by the House of Representatives earlier in the week. It calls for a “flat budget”, generally funding State programs (including education) at the same levels as FY 2014.

The appropriations for elementary and secondary education includes transportation reimbursements, bilingual education, and early childhood education funded at FY '14 levels. Additional funding was dedicated to the General State Aid formula in order to maintain the per pupil foundation level proration at approximately 89%. The education budget (**HB 6093**) fully funds the assessment line item to include funding for the ACT examination.

The current individual income tax rate is 5%; the current corporate income tax rate is 7%. On January 1, the individual rate drops to 3.75% and the corporate rate falls to 5.25%. The legislature may revisit this issue in the fall Veto Session after the General Election in November. It will take approval of legislation to either extend the tax rates or make them permanent at the higher level.

SCHOOL FUNDING BILL

SB 16 (Manar, D-Bunker Hill), the bill that would revamp the current formula of how elementary and secondary education funds are distributed, **will be studied over the summer** by the House of Representatives. The bill passed the Senate on Tuesday, but the House was mostly uninvolved in the issue over the last year and did not appoint members to participate in the funding committee. Thus, the additional time is needed to review the plan, according to a House Democrat spokesman. The bill could be considered in the fall Veto Session.

Here are a few of the budget-related bills that will be sent to the Governor for his consideration:

BUDGET IMPLEMENTATION BILL

SB 220 (Kotowski, D-Park Ridge) is the budget implementation bill that contains the substantive language to implement the FY '15 State budget. The bill diverts an additional \$20 million from the Corporate Personal Property Replacement Tax (CPPRT) by adding another group of county employees that will be paid from these local government and school district revenues. It also requires school districts to pick up \$85 million of the state's Teachers' Retirement System (TRS) obligation for employees paid with federal funds. In August, 2013 the TRS board chose to lower the school district's rate to 7.4% from the FY 2014 level of 35.41% citing (among several reasons) the state's continued underfunding of the pension system as the cause for this exponential increase. SB 220 would reverse this action and force local school districts to again pick up the cost.

SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

HB 3793 (Currie, D-Chicago) contains appropriations for capital projects that do not require bonding. Approximately \$200 million from the General Revenue Fund is included. The bill appropriates \$54 million dollars to the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) for school maintenance grants. It also appropriate \$50 million for the Chicago Teachers' Pension Fund and \$35 million for school construction in the Chicago Public Schools system.

GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS

SB 3224 (Hutchison, D-Chicago Heights) provides the requisite bonding and spending authorization for the capital projects bill (**HB 3794**). It contains a \$600 million increase in the State's General Obligation Transportation Bond Series for "shovel-ready" road projects.

FUND TRANSFERS

HB 6096 (Madigan, D-Chicago) contains many budget-related provisions, including \$650 million in transfers from various dedicated funds into the General Revenue Fund. The bill also adds substantive language that will prevent the Governor from withholding salaries for legislators.

OMNIBUS ELECTIONS BILL

HB 105 (Chapa LaVia, D-Aurora) makes many changes to the Illinois Election Code, including: language for the minimum wage increase referendum; allows for same-day voter registration; extends the times for early voting and absentee voting; and other changes. For school districts, it includes clean-up language affecting schools that clarifies the process for simultaneous filing of nominating petitions now that the county clerk will be accepting the petitions. It also makes a clarification regarding the filing of certificates of nomination and nomination papers with the election authority (county clerk in most counties) where the principal office of the school district is located and that the filing period would remain no more than 113 nor less than 106 days before the consolidated election.

OTHER BILL ACTION THIS WEEK

The following bills have been approved by both chambers and will be sent to the Governor:

SB 2793 (Hutchison) requires the ISBE to annually prepare a report on student discipline in all school districts. It requires the ISBE to analyze the data and determine the top quartile of school districts for each of the following metrics: (i) total number of instructional days on which students were excluded because of out-of-school suspensions or expulsions, divided by the total student population; and (ii) racial disproportionality with respect to the use of out-of-school suspensions, expulsions, and school-based arrests and criminal citations. Each of the school districts identified in these quartiles must submit a school improvement plan identifying the strategies the school district will implement to reduce the use of harsh disciplinary practices or racial disproportionality or both if applicable.

HB 3199 (Cassidy, D-Chicago) provides that school districts are encouraged to close the school or hold a teachers institute on election day if the school is used as a polling place. It also provides that a government agency which makes a public building under its control available for use as a polling place shall ensure the portion of the building to be used as the polling place is accessible to handicapped and elderly voters and allow the election authority to administer the election.

HB 3937 (Chapa La Via) extends the moratorium on the establishment of charter schools with virtual-schooling components in school districts through Dec. 31, 2016 (instead of through Apr. 1, 2014).

HB 3942 (Walsh, D-Joliet) increases the debt limit for Chaney-Monge School District 88 under certain circumstances.

HB 4527 (Chapa La Via) requires a charter school to comply with all federal and state laws and rules applicable to public schools that pertain to special education and the instruction of English language learners.

HB 5397 (Mayfield, D-North Chicago) requires all public schools to use a physical fitness assessment and report fitness information to the ISBE to assess student fitness indicators. The bill:

- Defines “physical fitness assessment” as a “series of assessments to measure aerobic capacity, body composition, muscular strength, muscular endurance, and flexibility”
- Mandates that (beginning in the 2016-17 school year) ISBE “requires all schools to use scientifically-based, health-related physical fitness assessment for grades 3-12 and periodically report fitness information to ISBE”
- Requires schools to “integrate health-related fitness testing into the curriculum as an instructional tool”
- Creates a task force, appointed by the State Superintendent, to make recommendations on validating physical fitness assessment scores, the frequency of the P.E. reports to ISBE, minimum fitness indicators for aerobic capacity, muscular strength, endurance, and flexibility, and other items
- Requires ISBE to use the recommendations of the task force in its rules and regulations on the new P.E. assessments

HB 5546 (Chapa La Via) provides for limited recall for certain tenured teachers who were in “Group 2” because of receiving a “needs improvement” on the latest teacher evaluation and who have been part of a reduction in force provided the other evaluation used for determining the reduction in force list is a “satisfactory”, “proficient” or “excellent”. The amendment also allows a school district to use, on a district-wide basis and at the school district's sole cost and expense, an alternate survey of learning conditions instrument pre-approved by the State Superintendent, instead of the Five Essentials Survey used by the ISBE.

This legislative report was written and edited by the lobbyists of the Illinois Association of School Boards to provide information to the members of the organizations that comprise the Statewide School Management Alliance.

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

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