



ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE REPORT (98-52)

FOCUS COMING BACK ON LEGISLATIVE ISSUES

With the legislature adjourned since the end of May, and lawmakers securely shifted into campaign mode, it has been a relatively slow few months in the legislative arena. The exception to this has been the activity around the school funding reform bill, **SB 16 (Manar, D-Bunker Hill)**, which has been the topic of many meetings, hearings, and forums this summer and fall.

Politically, **Governor Pat Quinn (D-Chicago)** and **Republican Challenger Bruce Rauner** of Winnetka have been busy campaigning around the State and flooding radio and television stations with campaign commercial after commercial. Select races for Illinois House and Senate seats have also reached a boiling point in many areas. For many, the November 4 Election Day cannot get here soon enough.

Attention now, however, is starting to be given to legislative issues as the Veto Session is getting closer (November 19-21 and December 2-4) and committees and task forces established in the spring are starting to gear up.

SCHOOL FUNDING BILL

SB 16 was approved by the Senate in the spring but was not taken up by the House of Representatives. A “working group” of Democrat House members began meeting this summer to discuss the bill which indicated to many that there was some momentum to call the bill for a vote in the House this fall. As talks continued and more school districts jumped into the fray based on projected funding disbursements, the bill has received more scrutiny and study. The common theme echoed by most everyone close to the bill is that it will not be called for a vote in its current form. What changes are forthcoming, however, is unknown. The bill seeks to:

- Revise the school funding formula to shift State resources to those districts with the most need – generally, property poor school districts and districts with a high concentration of at-risk students
- “Means test” districts (measure their ability to pay locally) so those districts with more available local resources will receive less State funding accordingly. The current General State Aid formula does this now, but this proposal would add the local funding element to special education personnel, regular transportation, and most all other separate budget line items (English language learners, vocational education, etc.)
- Strive for a “single funding formula” where most all K-12 funding will be in the GSA fund. Instead of having separate budget line items, additional weightings within the GSA formula will be added for the following students: limited English proficiency, low income, children with disabilities, summer school education, gifted pupils, transportation, and vocational education

- Keep a few budget items outside of GSA: early childhood education, special education transportation and private tuition costs, breakfast/lunch programs, supplemental grants for PTELL districts

Some of the provisions that seem to be still under review include: somehow addressing adequacy as it relates to a school funding system; adding a true “hold harmless” provision to limit the loss of funds to certain school districts; determining the fate of the PTELL grant; assuring that the weightings used in the formula are data driven; and reviewing current property tax assessment practices, especially as they are used to determine the value of agriculture property.

There are several meetings being planned in certain areas around the State to discuss SB 16. Some are organized by school districts, some by Regional Offices of Education, and some by education reform groups and coalitions.

ISBE BUDGET HEARINGS

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) has scheduled a series of hearings to receive input from local school districts regarding the Fiscal Year 2016 State budget. The meeting schedule is:

October 15	Champaign
November 10	Quincy
November 12	Round Lake
November 17	Granite City
November 21	Chicago

More details can be found at: <http://www.isbe.net/calendar/default.htm#ph>

SCHOOL SAFETY TRAINING

The Illinois Emergency Management Agency has a dedicated branch for school safety issues. The IASB works closely with it through its membership on the Illinois Terrorism Task Force and has membership on the School Safety Task Force. The School & Campus Security Training Program has a number of training opportunities coming up:

October 15	Grayslake
October 16	East Moline
October 20	Peoria
November 12	Monmouth
November 18	Hillsboro

More details can be found at: <http://www.illinois.gov/ready/plan/Pages/Schools.aspx>

CIVIC EDUCATION TASK FORCE

The task force issued its report in May and now has scheduled meetings around the State to receive public input on its recommendations. Recommendations include adding civic education to the curriculum, State standards, and standardized tests. The hearings are set for:

October 13 Chicago
October 15 Villa Park
October 21 Springfield
November 6 Carbondale

More details can be found at: <http://www.isbe.net/career/html/CETF.htm>

OTHER TASK FORCES AND COMMISSIONS

The Alliance has also recently placed members on the Assessment Review Task Force, the Physical Fitness Assessment Task Force, the Young Adults Heroin Use Task Force, and the Teacher Recruiting Task Force. Meetings and hearings for these panels are not yet available.

OTHER VETO SESSION ISSUES

Besides the discussions of SB 16, Veto Session could see some other issues emerge.

EXTENSION OF CURRENT INCOME TAX RATES

With no legislative action this year, the current individual income tax rate will fall from 5% to 3.75% and the current corporate income tax rate would drop from 7% to 5.25% on January 1, 2015. Such a rollback in rates would create a corresponding decline in state revenues of approximately \$2 billion for the second half of FY 2015 – and twice that for the FY 2016 budget. If this significant loss of revenue were to occur, public education could see budget cuts putting transportation funding in jeopardy and causing General State Aid to be prorated at alarming rates.

The push to either extend or make permanent these current income tax rates fell short in the spring legislative session. The issue will be on the front burner in the Veto Session.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE

SB 3004 (Lightford, D-Maywood) would limit the authority a local school district has regarding the disciplining of students, including the use of expulsions or suspensions. It would require behavioral support services and alternative educational services be provided to students and, unless otherwise required by statute for a specific criminal offense, prohibit a student from being arrested or otherwise cited for a criminal offense committed during school hours while on school grounds.

The Alliance opposes the bill and worked with the sponsor and proponents of the bill in the spring in an effort to find common ground, but no compromise was reached. The bill will likely be debated again in the Veto Session.

REMOVAL OF SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS

SB 2340 (Steans, D-Chicago) contains the ISBE proposal to remove elected school board members from office because of poor governance as determined by the State Board. The Alliance strongly opposed the original bill, and was successful in having it amended to significantly reduce the scope of the initiative. The bill now would only allow for such action to be taken against four school districts total, and two have already seen such action take place (East St. Louis and North Chicago). Strict criteria were also added to the bill to set the parameters of any such action.

The bill was approved by the Senate in the spring but no action was taken by the House of Representatives. The ISBE has placed the bill on its Veto Session agenda.

CARBON MONOXIDE DETECTORS IN SCHOOLS

After an incident in a school building this fall in which a carbon monoxide leak sent dozens of students and staff to local hospitals, there were immediate calls for a new requirement for CO detectors in all public schools. **SB 3669 (McCann, R-Carlinville)** would require that each school building be equipped with approved carbon monoxide alarms in accordance with the rules of the State Fire Marshal. The State Fire Marshal would determine by rule the number of alarms each building must have and where those alarms must be located, and require that the alarms be inspected each year.

The Alliance is pushing for a clearly identified revenue source to be included in the bill so school districts can comply with any new mandate.

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.