

April 24, 2015



ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE REPORT (99-16)

BILL APPROVED TO MOVE SCHOOL BOARD ELECTIONS

The Illinois Senate approved a bill that would move the election of school board members from the non-partisan Consolidated Election in April of odd-numbered years to the partisan General Election in November of even-numbered years. **SB 669 (Cullerton, T., D-Villa Park)** was passed by the Senate on a vote of 41-11-2 and was sent to the House of Representatives for further consideration.

The bill, opposed by the Alliance, moves school board members to the General Election (the same election for President of the United States, Governor, and members of the General Assembly) but allows other members of units of local government (municipalities, community college districts, park districts, and library districts) to remain in the Consolidated Election in April of odd-numbered years.

This bill will unnecessarily politicize the office of school board member. Though school board members would not have to declare a party to run, with the political parties so heavily involved in this partisan election it is inevitable that county political parties will be slating school board members across the State.

SCHOOL DISCIPLINE BILL AMENDED FOR ALLIANCE

The bill that would have made significant changes in how school districts may use the student discipline tools of suspension and expulsion, and would have stripped local school management from much of its authority, was amended this week to address Alliance concerns. The amendment was added and then the Senate passed **SB 100 (Lightford, D-Maywood)** and sent it over to the House for consideration. The analysis of the original bill can be found at: <http://www.iasb.com/govrel/alr9910.cfm>

The Alliance had been working with the sponsor and the bill's supporters for over year on reaching an agreement on the issue of suspensions and expulsions, but ultimately, it was the phone calls to legislators from school board members and administrators that made the difference. After Senators had discussions about the bill with their local school districts, there was a demand for amendments to the bill.

SB 100 still requires updates of district school discipline policies and prohibits "zero tolerance" policies, but the amendment, drafted by Alliance legal counsel, adds back significant school district authority and flexibility. The Alliance removed its opposition to the bill with adoption of the amendment.

CIVICS EDUCATION MANDATE APPROVED

The Illinois House of Representatives has approved yet another mandate on local school districts. The bill that requires high school students to take a one semester course on civics passed on a vote of 81-29. The legislation now goes to the Senate for consideration.

There is much misinformation swirling around the proposal. **HB 4025 (Conroy, D-Downers Grove)** adds to high school graduation requirements at least one semester of civics education which must be separate and apart from United States History and American Government courses. Supposedly, a private funding source would be provided (though not named in the legislation) to pay for this new mandate, but school districts obviously could not rely on such a vague promise of funding. In most school districts with high schools, additions to the curriculum and additional teachers would be needed to implement the bill as currently drafted. Legislators need to hear from school board members and administrators to explain the true cost of

this proposal. Talking points on the bill can be found at:
<http://www.iasb.com/govrel/hb4025civicstalkingpoints.pdf>

VISION 20/20 FUNDING PROPOSAL DISCUSSED

Alliance leaders were at the witness table Wednesday to present the Vision 20/20 evidenced-based school funding plan to the House Task Force on School Funding. Dr. Brent Clark, Executive Director of IASA and Dr. Michael Jacoby, Executive Director of IASBO, explained the concept of the plan that would determine the true cost of providing an adequate education to all Illinois children by using real data. More information on the plan can be found at: <http://illinoisvision2020.org/2015/04/08/sb-1403hb-4022-evidence-based-school-funding-solution/>

No bill was called for a vote, but this was an important exercise that raises awareness of the Vision 20/20 proposal and keeps the concept alive for bill packages later in the session.

OTHER BILL ACTION THIS WEEK

The following bills were approved by the House of Representatives and were sent to the Senate for further consideration:

HB 397 (Welch, D-Westchester), as amended, preserves local control by allowing local school board decisions on charter schools to only be appealed to the Illinois State Charter School Commission under specific circumstances.

HB 494 (Cassidy, D-Evergreen Park), as amended, regarding criminal history records checks for applicants for school district positions, provides that a conviction for a felony more than seven years prior to application for employment must not, in and of itself, be an automatic bar to employment. Exceptions are made for serious crimes that do bar employment (sex crimes, narcotics, Class X felonies) with a school district.

HB 806 (Golar, D-Chicago), as amended, allows a student enrolled in grade 7 or 8 to enroll in a course offered by the high school but taken where the student attends school, provided that the teacher holds a professional educator license endorsed for the grade level and content area of the course.

HB 1790 (Cavaletto, R-Salem), as amended, amends the Educator Licensure Article of the School Code to provide that the career and technical educator endorsement on an Educator License with Stipulations may be renewed and, for individuals who were issued the endorsement on or after January 1, 2015, the license may be renewed if the individual passes a test of basic skills.

HB 2683 (Davis, W., D-E. Hazel Crest) contains the first component of the Differentiated Accountability Model proposed in the Vision 20/20 plan.

HB 3190 (Davis, W.), as amended, provides that if a person attempts to enroll a pupil in a school district and the school board finds that the pupil is a non-resident of that district, the board must provide certain information to the person attempting to enroll the pupil. Additionally, the bill allows the person attempting to enroll the pupil to appeal the decision of the board to the regional superintendent who may overturn the local board's decision.

HB 3197 (Chapa LaVia, D-Aurora), as amended, creates the Attendance Commission within the ISBE to study chronic absenteeism and make recommendations for strategies to prevent chronic absenteeism. IASB, IASA, and IPA will each have a representative on the Commission.

The following bills were approved by the Senate and were sent to the House of Representatives for further consideration:

SB 52 (Clayborne, D-E. St. Louis), as amended, allows school districts to transport children to school who live within 1 ½ miles of school if there is a significant risk of violent crime.

SB 1393 (Bennett, D-Champaign), as amended, requires the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) to annually confer with the Illinois Community College Board to identify industries and occupations that face workforce shortages and notify school districts of these identified industries and occupations. The ISBE would also award incentive grants to school districts for each pupil in the school district who obtained a diploma if the school district has an industry-recognized certification program.

SB 1410 (Mulroe, D-Chicago), as amended, provides that children of parents or legal guardians who object to health, dental, or eye examinations, immunizations, or to vision and hearing screening tests on religious grounds shall not be required to undergo the examinations if they present to the local school authority a signed Certificate of Religious Exemption detailing the grounds for objection and the specific immunizations, tests, or examinations to which they object.

SB 1505 (Bertino-Tarrant, D-Shorewood) requires that the State Superintendent of Schools, after appointment by the ISBE, must be subject to the advice and consent of the Senate.

SB 1561 (Manar, D-Bunker Hill), in the School Construction Grant Program, allows for the use of the highest grant index among the school districts involved in a consolidation. The bill is an Alliance initiative.

SB 1628 (Brady, R-Bloomington) provides that if a disaster occurs a month or more after the start of a school year in any portion of the territory of a school district and that disaster affects the district's pupil attendance, then the Average Daily Attendance figure must be no less than the best month of pupil attendance for that school year before the disaster occurred (to apply to the school year in which the disaster occurred and the four school years immediately following).

SB 1793 (Hastings, D-Matteson), as amended, requires the ISBE to develop a model youth suicide awareness and prevention policy that includes certain components that school districts are required to adopt in a policy on suicide awareness beginning in the 2015-2016 school year.

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.

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