



## **ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE REPORT (99-36)**

### **GOVERNOR GIVES STATE OF THE STATE ADDRESS**

As is typical with most State of the State addresses, Governor Bruce Rauner began the address by acknowledging elected officials and first responders, and went on to encourage prayers for an upcoming deployment of Illinois National Guard troops. The kind words and friendly remarks quickly gave way to a discussion on the economic and budget reforms he is pushing and his administration's accomplishments of the last year. The half-hour speech wrapped up with the Governor outlining ten education policy changes he would like implemented.

Holding strongly to the principles of his "Turnaround Agenda", the Governor specifically highlighted the need for workers' compensation reform, pension reform, limits on collective bargaining, and property tax relief. No specifics were mentioned for these initiatives. Given the tone of the Governor and the response from Democrat leaders, it does not appear that a compromise is going to happen in the near future.

However, on more than one occasion, Governor Rauner specifically expressed his desires and plans to work with Senate President John Cullerton on the major issues. No mention was made of House Speaker Michael Madigan by name.

Despite an ongoing budget impasse and the possible closure of additional human service organizations and some State universities, finding a solution to the budget stalemate was not highlighted in the address. Instead, the Governor put forward a list of accomplishments from the past year. Chief among those accomplishments was saving money through government efficiencies in executive agencies. He laid out savings of hundreds of millions of dollars through State department action, elimination of "special" deals, and fraud elimination. The effort to overhaul Illinois' criminal justice system was also a point of pride by the Governor.

While the speech gave a glimpse into the Governor's plan and where he sees challenges facing Illinois, the most meaningful information for school districts can be found in his ten long-term goals for education. They include:

1. Work closely with President Cullerton to significantly increase state support for education, focusing additional resources more on low income and rural school districts so "we can provide high quality classrooms in every community, without taking money away from any other districts".
2. Provide proper funding for early childhood education while setting rigorous benchmarks for program performance.
3. Give school districts more flexibility when it comes to bargaining, contracting, and bidding, to save taxpayers money, while enabling districts to pay higher teacher salaries.
4. Empower our universities and community colleges to reduce their administrative costs, work rules, pension liabilities and unfunded mandates, and then offer additional financial support to those schools that show real progress in putting more resources in the classroom.
5. Support more partnerships between high schools, community colleges, and local employers so that young people who are not going on to higher education can receive the training to step into good paying careers.
6. Develop a comprehensive, consistent, objective student growth measure, "not necessarily based on the PARCC system", so students' progress can be tracked in each grade towards college or career, holding schools accountable for results while eliminating unnecessary testing and bureaucratic mandates.

7. Support programs that create more quality school choice options for low income “children stuck in failing schools”.
8. Create new quality schools of choice for disconnected youth as a way to get them back in school.
9. Consolidate the majority of our councils and task forces under the P20 and Early Learning Councils, in order to decrease bureaucracy, increase high-quality outcomes for learners, and improve the coordination of these working groups.
10. Create a Cabinet on Children and Youth so we can better align our health and human services with cradle to career education initiatives, in order to provide higher quality, fully integrated services for young people.

The State of the State Address is just one of the first actions to be taken setting the stage for what is likely to be a unique and highly charged environment under the Capitol dome this spring. The legislature has a fairly light session schedule through February and March – mostly due to the March 15 primary election. Legislators are scheduled to be in session working most days in April and May.

The Governor will deliver his Budget Address on February 17.

*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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