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Tuesday, May 9, 2017

School officials urged to contact legislators over the next two weeks



IASB Deputy Executive Director Ben Schwarm urges board members and administrators to contact their legislators about passing a comprehensive state budget and opposing any unfunded school mandates.



Deputy Executive Director Ben Schwarm

The Illinois General Assembly will be debating bills in committees and on the respective floors of the legislative chambers over the next couple of weeks. Now is an ideal time for school board members and administrators to contact their legislators and provide input on bills that would have significant impact. Details of how these proposals, if implemented, would affect local school districts send a powerful message to legislators.

The first message – approval of a comprehensive, balanced budget for the entire state is paramount. Through the two-year budget stalemate, K-12 schools have suffered, higher education has suffered, and the failure to fund social services has been harmful to at-risk constituencies, students in public schools, service providers and vendors, and the community at large. The legislature, in a bi-partisan fashion, must adopt a budget that the governor will sign.

Second – stop the mandates. Over the past ten years more than 100 new unfunded and underfunded mandates have been imposed on local school districts. These add new costs, all while school funding has declined. They add new responsibilities that require time, all without adding a minute to the school day or a day to the school year.

IASB, along with our School Management Alliance partners, have stopped dozens of new proposed requirements thus far, including bills that would have:

- required new instruction on civics in junior high schools
- required new instruction on work ethic for 6th graders
- made passage of a class in Black History a prerequisite for graduating junior high and high school
- required the posting of the nutritional value of any food sold on school premises
- required, to the minute, the amount of time elementary school students have recess

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Other bills have been stopped as well, such as bills that would have prohibited a school district from charging any fee for summer school; established a private school voucher program; stopped the ability for a school district to use interfund transfers; and required dozens of new data postings on school district websites.

Still, a few bills are pending that would add new burdensome mandates on school districts, including:

- requiring all elementary and high schools to offer instruction on cursive writing ([HB 2977](#), Welch, D-Westchester)
- requiring all schools with grades 6-12 to provide feminine hygiene products to students at no cost (estimated to cost over \$13 million statewide) ([HB 3215](#), Wallace, D-Rockford)
- requiring school districts to establish a comprehensive policy on student accelerated placement, which includes a committee to make decisions on the placement upon any request ([SB 1223](#), Lightford, D-Maywood)
- requiring school buses to have seatbelts which increase cost, reduce capacity, and have no clear safety advantages according to many studies ([SB 1431](#), Sandoval, D-Chicago and [HB 3377](#), Lang, D-Chicago)

School board members and administrators are encouraged to contact their legislators and urge them to oppose these new mandates.

A complete list of "hot bills" that will be voted on in the next two weeks can be found [here](#).

Posted by [IASB Communications](#) at 2:58 PM

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