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## Fwd: Budget process still mystifies Rauner

1 message

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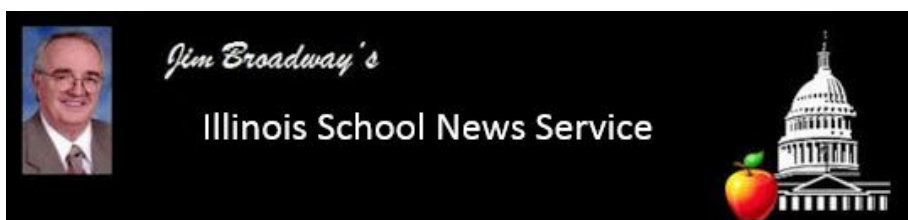
Fri, May 11, 2018 at 7:28 AM

May board meeting

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From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>  
Date: Fri, May 11, 2018 at 2:02 AM  
Subject: Budget process still mystifies Rauner  
To: jbauer@panaschools.com

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## Budget process still mystifies Rauner

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

[NOTE: For those of you who rely on the newsletter being available on the ISNS web site, be aware that this issue may be late in arriving at that location. We are in the process of changing web hosts, for reasons of which you are already aware, and I'm confident that this issue will get posted - but it may be a day or so late.]

Gov. Bruce Rauner has a chance this month to do something he's never done before - to actually sign a budget bill passed by the General Assembly before the constitutional deadline for adjournment of the spring legislative session. I believe he will achieve that goal. It's to his political benefit, but it won't be easy.

The budget negotiations have only just begun and already there's posturing. Rauner is at a disadvantage. As you know, the Chicago-based Civic Federation - a conservative group that generally leans toward the GOP - has made it clear (in conspicuous fashion) that Rauner's budget "plan" stinks up the place.

The organization [charitably](#) describes Rauner's proposal as "precariously balanced" with a projected \$351 million surplus (less than 1%) that relies on \$1.8 billion in "projected savings and revenues" that are unlikely to occur. One such unlikely strategy would shift employer pension costs from the state to the school districts.

**It's not that the Civic Federation disagrees with** what Rauner would like to see happen, it just disagrees on how to do it. For example, the pension "cost-shift" is a shared goal - the Federation refers to it as "aligning responsibility for payment of current-service pension costs with decision making about workers' salaries."

But phasing in the shift over four years for non-Chicago districts while making Chicago Public Schools assume the full burden in FY 2019 just "exacerbates inequity to Chicago taxpayers, who also pay for teachers' pensions outside the City," the Federation asserts in a [report released this week](#).

The non-Chicago districts are [frowning on that idea as well](#).

The Federation also agrees with Rauner that the "consideration model" of pension reform - giving public employee union members a choice between keeping their otherwise protected 3%-per year, compounded, pension increases or going to a lesser pension increase and keeping (presumably unprotected) health benefits.

But Rauner should not have assumed any FY 2019 budget "savings" based on that pension "reform" strategy until it is enacted and tested in court for constitutionality. Rauner also rejects any "tax increase" (there's an election, you know), but the Federation rationally supports a widened sales tax base.

**Generally, Rauner seems to be trying harder** than he has in the past, working with the legislative leaders to agree on a full-year budget for FY 2019 (which begins July 1). He has [hosted closed-door leadership meetings](#) in his office, and there seems to be some points on which the meeting participants agree.

Senate President John Cullerton [described it for Illinois Homepage](#), an Internet news outlet: "We agree on having a balanced budget," Cullerton said. "We agree on getting out of here and nobody wants to go over the summer without a budget." In an election year, those are political ambitions they all can share.

But there are always some suspicions. Some Republicans who are closely allied with Rauner (not all in the GOP are in that posture) suspect Democrats of wanting to stall the budget process, or make it fail altogether, just to reinforce perceptions that Rauner is, as his primary opponent [Rep. Jeanne Ives](#) said he is, weak and inept.

By the way, the fact that Ives has not taken down all her mercifully anti-Rauner web pages seems to indicate a couple of important political realities: (1) Ives (correctly) expects Rauner to be [defeated by billionaire JB Pritzker](#) in the November general elections, and (2) Ives plans to assume leadership of the GOP in Illinois.

What will happen? I stand by [my previous prediction](#) that budgeting for FY 2019 will resemble budgeting in the pre-Rauner years. There will be arguments and there will be moments of faltering, but there are political reasons for all participants to finally accept a reasonable, *purportedly* balanced, pro-education budget.

**Today is the Senate's deadline for committees** to act on non-appropriation House bills. And no committees are meeting today that could consider taking action on House bills. Does that mean House bills that have never reached the order of second reading in the Senate are dead? For most, yes, but for some, no.

There is a Senate Education Committee hearing scheduled for 1 p.m. Tuesday with seven House bills posted. There's no indication yet that their deadlines have been extended, but extensions are common in the Senate. By Tuesday, they will be officially positioned as bills eligible to be considered in committee.

They seem to be pretty noncontroversial bills. No witness slips have been filed at this time, for or against any of them. But [you can file a slip](#) if you have an opinion about any of them. Only two of them had any votes cast against them on the floor of the House, but they all passed at least overwhelmingly.

[HB 4768](#) proposes changes to the oath of offices taken by school board members. It seemed unobjectionable, but it is a mandate and four House members cast votes against it. [HB 4799](#), a mandate for grade schools to provide instruction on safe biking and walking to school, evoked 13 "no" votes on the House floor.

**House committees have until Friday of next week** the 18th, to take action on Senate bills still in their custody, so they will be quite active next week. The House committee on PK-12 appropriations even has a [hearing scheduled for Tuesday](#). (Appropriations bills are not subjected to such rigid deadlines.)

[HB 5750](#) would appropriate \$16 million for school district Internet expansion projects. [HB 5828](#) would appropriate about \$5.8 million for early childhood program construction grants in general, and about \$1.4 million for an early childhood center and related facilities to be located specifically in Brighton Park.

Most often individual appropriations bills are not enacted, but committee presentations of them influence whether or not they wind up in any of the appropriations bills (sometimes there is only one) enacted on the final day of the legislative session. Committees have some say, but it is the caucus leaders who rule.

As mentioned above, even though nothing is "carved in stone" about the budget until a bill is passed and signed into law, an election-year budget, almost by definition, must be one that can be purported to be beneficial to public education. The \$350 million increase over last year's school funding is virtually certain.

But, of course, that will be exaggerated as to impact. With it, the state will simply fall another \$350 million or so behind the pace that would be needed for the state to keep its promise of "adequacy in the least affluent districts" by 2027. School funding "equity," in the strict dictionary sense, was never a promise.

**The House education committees on "substantive"** (non-budget) bills are scheduled to convene Wednesday (the panel on [Licensing, Administration & Oversight](#)) and Thursday ([Curriculum & Policies](#)), with ambitious agendas of Senate bills, mostly, that they will want to consider before next Friday's deadline.

Again, most of the bills in the House committees passed the Senate by comfortable to overwhelming vote margins, even if they did evoke some strong opposition. [SB 454](#), for example, requiring IEP teams to explain to parents why they decided a child does not need a certain special education service, [drew the opposition](#) of individual school districts and respected and influential statewide special education associations - but still passed the Senate 52-0.

Significant emphasis has been given this year to the teacher shortage, especially with regard to substitute teachers, and there are thoughtful folks who are concerned that standards will be lowered permanently to address a situation that is considered temporary. There's disagreement also about how to address the (false) perception that schools are unsafe, that they are frequent venues of gun violence. Yes, some folks even favor the dumb idea of arming teachers.

While it is impossible to predict the outcome of every bill, you can safely assume that (1) most bills enacted will have received bipartisan support; (2) the Democrats in charge of the House and the Senate will force roll calls on bills that are accepted by their party's "base" but objected to by the voters of the GOP persuasion. That reminds me. Look for Illinois to become, next week, the 37th state to "ratify" the Equal Rights Amendment.

([Here's the latest status](#) of all the School Code-amending bills that reached the second chamber.

**Some of my core beliefs were reinforced** Tuesday night when I attended an awards banquet hosted by leaders of Illinois Education Association Region 5, based in

Edwardsville. Mainly, my belief in the concept of the "professional persona" was what got reinforced the most. Educators have a way of doing that.

I've been a journalist since 1970. In that profession, you meet a lot of people, a lot of representatives of a lot of types of professions. Over the years, you begin to see a "persona" for many professions, a set of traits that are common to folks who share a professional identity. Doctors, real estate brokers, insurance salespeople, trial lawyers, elected officials and retail merchants - all these project positive values, mostly, but none as positive as educators.

The reason for this is, according to my core belief, *you become what you do*. If mendacity helps you in your job, then you'll become a liar. If what you do every day involves nurturing and protecting children, giving them the best guidance you can, even giving them a hug when they need it, all of that eventually will define you.

Not everyone stays in the profession, of course. Some just can't set aside the calculation of what's in it for me? Some get too frustrated with the disconnect between the high expectations and the low levels of respect that teachers endure in this country since the 1980s. But those who make a career of it are inspiring.

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5/11/2018

Pana Community Unit School District #8 Mail - Fwd: Budget process still mystifies Rauner

Sent by j.m.broadway74@gmail.com in collaboration with



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