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Fwd: School policy permeates the ballot

1 message

Jason Bauer <jbauer@panaschools.com>
To: nblodgett@panaschools.com

Mon, Nov 5, 2018 at 10:13 AM

November board meeting.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: State School News Service <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>
Date: November 5, 2018 at 9:24:44 AM CST
To: jbauer@panaschools.com
Subject: School policy permeates the ballot
Reply-To: j.m.broadway74@gmail.com

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To view the web version, [click here](#).**School policy permeates the ballot**

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Just a brief message today, an expression of the unusual influence that tomorrow's elections will have on public education, not just in Illinois but nationwide. I'm not going to write much, but I'll link you to two documents that you can read at your leisure as you congratulate yourself for having voted early.

Oh, you haven't taken advantage of Illinois' early-voting opportunity? Well, then, I guess I'll see you at the polling place tomorrow morning.

Just a brief review of what's in this election for Illinois advocates of public education. Most important, of course, is the gubernatorial election. Incumbent Republican Gov. Bruce Rauner has two strikes against him in this regard. First, his first education priority is expansion of charter schools. He's a privatizer.

Second, while he talks a good game about investment in public education, he has opposed the revenue policy that Illinois must have to make that investment. Remember, he was highly vocal in his praise for the new evidence-based education funding law, but he vetoed (fortunately overridden) the tax bill to pay for it.

That's pretty much it. If Rauner is reelected (almost impossible), school policy becomes uncertain again. But if the Democrat challenger, J.B. Pritzker, is elected, public education prevails over the privatizers and the voters will be asked to let the policymakers tax the rich enough to keep the schools afloat in the future.

How is that? Pritzker, who does not oppose charters (has funded two named), has called for a moratorium on creating any more of them and for the repeal of the authority of the Illinois State Charter School Commission to overturn decisions by locally elected boards of education to deny charter school applications.

On the revenue side, Pritzker proposes to offer the voters a constitutional amendment two years from now to remove the current requirement for a flat (regressive) income tax, leading to higher tax rates on the marginal incomes of very wealthy taxpayers (such as himself), without raising the rates for the rest of us.

The rest of the country is also focusing a great deal on education policy, [as reported by National Public Radio](#). Public education took a beating in the Great Recession, and still has not recovered in most states. Voters in many states are looking at referenda to try to catch up on that.

Funding sources are a major question, of course. Legalization and taxation of marijuana is on the ballot in some states (as Pritzker says it should be here), and casino gambling is a possibility as well (we already have enough of that). It is likely that new sources, such as sports betting, will be affected by Tuesday's voting.

Two states' gubernatorial elections are closely watched for their education impact. Wisconsin's union-busting privatizing Republican rich guy Gov. Scott Walker is opposed by the Democratic Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Evers, who hopes ameliorate the damage Walker has done to schools and educators.

Arizona's incumbent Republican Gov. Doug Ducey - an advocate for charter schools - is challenged by Arizona State University professor David Garcia, a critic of Ducey's education policy. There's also a ballot question on expanding the state's voucher program to cover all children, not just those with special needs.

The NPR article is brief, well written and worth reading.

Finally, the American Federation of Teachers has released a comprehensive analysis of how education suffered in state policy during what the AFT refers to as the "[Decade of Neglect](#)," a period extending from 2009 to 2017, analyzing data from the National Association of State Budget Officers.

There is no question about the fact that the years of limited revenue to the state were punishing to Illinois school districts, and the budgetless first two years of the Rauner Administration were exasperating. But a review of what other states had to endure at the same time would almost make one grateful.

After the end-notes, there is a lengthy section in which the experiences of all 50 states are reviewed, one at a time in alphabetical order. While some of the stories are engrossing, you can skip down to the Illinois saga for an interesting and accurate account of how PK-12 and higher education fared.

I may send you a wrap-up by the weekend, giving you my take on the election outcomes and a preview of the veto session (which begins on Tuesday of next week). If I can't get it to you by Friday, look for it next Monday. Meanwhile, enjoy the elections (and the fact that campaign ads are finally over). - Jim

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