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ISBE's final FY 2019 budget hearing is Friday

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

The State Board of Education will take [testimony for last time](#) Friday on the budget that is now being developed for the fiscal year beginning next July 1. The budget hearing will begin after the board's regular meeting, which is to start at 9:30 in Room 16-503 of the [Thompson Center](#), 100 W Randolph Street, in Chicago.

ISBE estimates the budget hearing will begin at about 11 a.m.

The agency has [posted a form](#) to be used by individuals and organizations for providing input on state school funding, and also if they are expecting to testify at the budget hearing. Such hearings are part of the process by which ISBE develops funding recommendations for the governor and the General Assembly.

The coming year's school funding budget will be more important than most, because it will sort of set the levels by which the state increases funding annually under the new "evidence-based" school funding process that was codified in law in the spring. (The \$350 million increase for FY 2018 is clearly insufficient.)

SB 1947, now P.A. 100-0465, [set an ambitious goal](#) that - within just 10 years - every Illinois school district will have the resources needed "to ensure the educational development of all persons to the limits of their capacities...." I've been told that increases will need to be about \$650 million per year for that to happen.

Whether or not the governor and the legislature actually turn ISBE's budget recommendation into law, ISBE is not obligated to recommend only *what the policymakers are believed* to see as reasonable. ISBE's duty is to propose a budget that would be sufficient to cause the promise of SB 1947 to be kept.

Tell 'em to ask for \$650 million more for FY 2019 - *and every year thereafter*.

While working through their regular meeting agenda, board members will consider requesting federal funding for the second part of a \$5.3 million abstinence education grant that "supports the commitment to educate students so they are responsible and possess skills that will sustain them through adulthood."

The concept of "abstinence education" is significantly controversial, especially when it is described as "abstinence-only." But that is not the case in Illinois. [ISBE's agenda packet](#) (see pp. 330-332) asserts compliance with a law passed four years ago ([P.A. 98-0441](#)); while "encouraging" abstinence, that law also requires including instruction on "contraception for the prevention of pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases...."

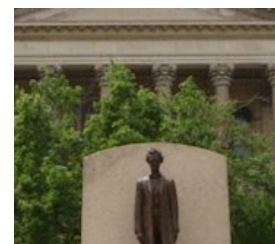
The board members are also expected to approve the promulgation of rules detailing the processes by which approved charter schools are allowed to borrow up to \$750-per enrolled student as initial funding to help the schools get started, and also the details on how these interest-free loans are to be repaid.

The Charter School Revolving Loan Fund is not a new addition to Illinois law, but rules have just not been adopted to implement the fund. The board's proposed rules (see pp. 318-329) will go through a promulgation process that takes months to complete - including a period of public input, hearings and approval by the bipartisan Joint Committee on Administrative Rules - before they can take effect.

Standards for endorsements to be granted to practitioners in a wide range of teaching fields (pp. 7-317) will also be considered for promulgation by the agency as revised rules. (As part of the "Consent Agenda," rules promulgations can be approved quickly. Board members receive the information long in advance of the meetings, so there is often no lengthy discussion involved after ISBE staff responds to their questions.)

Another item in relation to which state Superintendent Tony Smith will seek the board's approval is for increased funding for the Early Childhood Block Grant's "training and technical assistance" activities provided by the Ounce of Prevention Fund (yes, the excellent non-profit led by Gov. Bruce Rauner's wife [Diana Rauner](#)).

As explained in the [information packet](#) (pp. 333-335), the need for additional resources is a result of a \$50 million hike in early childhood appropriations for this fiscal year, "with approximately \$7.875 million of that being allocated to programs serving children birth to age 3 years" adding significant burdens for The Ounce.



If approved by the board, funding would increase by \$3.5 million, bringing the total through FY 2021 to \$9,750,000. Of the increased amount, \$500,000 would be added to this fiscal year's payments and \$1 million would be added for each year from FY 2019 through FY 2021. (Board approval is required for contracts over \$1 million.)

A governor doesn't have to be a loser. Speaking of Gov. Rauner, he's been [spending money and working hard](#) in recent weeks, trying to be approved by more folks and disapproved by fewer. A [Morning Consult poll](#) recently put his approvals at 42% - up six points since September - and disapprovals down seven at 49%.

Sure, he's still under water. Sure, 84% of the nation's governors are more popular - or at least less disliked - than Rauner. But he's moving toward the 50-50 mark. It's an ambitious goal, given the turmoil of his first try at running a state, but his latest zig-zag has been back toward the center. Maybe that will help.

It may be too late for Bruce, but there's a powerful lesson for him in the poll numbers. A Republican doesn't have to be a loser in a blue state. Gov. Charlie Baker, for example, is a Republican governor in Massachusetts, one of the bluest states in the nation. His approval number is 71%; only 17% disapproved of him.

How does Baker do it? By succeeding as a "nonpartisan manager" of the commonwealth, Boston College law professor Richard Albert told the pollsters. "He has left few traces of an ideologue," Albert added, "and has instead rolled up his sleeves to fix the problems of everyday people." Why can't Rauner just do that?

Since last November, there seems to have been an increased emphasis (I don't know why) by many people to encourage all citizens to see the importance of voting in a democracy, to become informed about the election calendar and processes and, especially, to become registered voters.

In Illinois, [nothing could be easier](#). The calendar and processes are easy to learn, that is. The elections of 2018 will be a bit complicated in Illinois just because of the candidates. There's a crowd on the Democratic side seeking the nomination to oppose Rauner next November. Rauner is also likely to have a primary foe.

Attorney General Lisa Madigan's decision not to seek reelection next year has brought candidates for that office out of the woodwork, candidates of both parties. And a slew of legislators - on both sides of the aisle - have also called it quits after their current term - and some have even left more than a year early.

There will be many "lame ducks" in the House and Senate come January.

This will affect Illinois educators, public schools and public education advocates throughout the next year. Candidates will be asking for their votes; they should all hear what the educators expect - *keep the promise of SB 1947* by increasing school funding by \$650-per year, every year, no matter what it takes.

ISNS will focus on the public education implications of next year's elections. We'll try to describe the candidates' school policy positions accurately. We'll tell you what we think we can expect with regard to legislative partisan divisions after 2018. Heck, I'll even share some election-related songs I wrote many years ago.

You can be very helpful in this regard. If you see something in a local newspaper or on a web site or a FaceBook page that you think will deepen my understanding of what's going on politically in your area, please use the comment link below and share that information with me. (You will be anonymous unless you request otherwise.)

ISNS archives back through 2015 are available again for subscribers. You remember the process. Go to [this web page](#). Remember, this page location is a secret, just between us insiders, so don't go blabbing it around. Thanks. - Jim

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Your inputs - questions, comments, suggestions - are valued. For twenty years ISNS has been guided by wisdom "from the field." To contribute in this way, just [click this link to our contact form](#).