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Fwd: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly at the Statehouse

1 message

Jason Bauer <jbauer@panaschools.com>
To: Dara Thompson <dthompson@panaschools.com>

Tue, Apr 24, 2018 at 1:19 PM

May board meeting

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From: **IASA** <iasa@iasaedu.org>
Date: Tue, Apr 24, 2018 at 12:14 PM
Subject: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly at the Statehouse
To: jbauer@panaschools.com

April 24, 2018

The Good, the Bad and the Ugly at the Statehouse
Closer look at what bills the Alliance supports, opposes

There has been a flurry of activity at the capitol the past few weeks, with the spring session underway. In this Capitol Watch, I will do my best to bring you up to speed on issues affecting public education and various bills we support and oppose.

But first, I want to start with some positive news from the Illinois Comptroller, which made this announcement on Facebook Friday.

"Yesterday, I directed the release of mandated categorical grants totaling \$207 million to K-12 schools. These second quarter

categorical payments come two months earlier than the office was able to make these payments last year."

The comptroller also says she released the second of six payments of \$350 million in new tier funding.

This is great news for public education. However, IASA wants to remind everyone we still have a long way to go for each school district to reach its adequacy target, as identified in the new evidence-base model.

Therefore, it's important for superintendents to continue to reach out to your local legislators and share with them why additional funding is critical for your district.

Now, let's transition to the statehouse. For a roundup of bills affecting public education, checkout IASB's most recent [Alliance Legislative report](#). For Capitol Watch, I will only focus on a handful of bills.

SUPPORT

[HB 5627](#)

Sponsored by Reps. Bennett (R-Gibson City), Mayfield (D-Waukegan), Cavaletto (R-Salem), Bourne (R-Raymond) and Reick (R-Woodstock)

There has been other legislation filed related to the teacher and substitute teacher shortage, but I feel this would do the most to increase the applicant pool of both teachers and substitutes in Illinois. Here's what the bill does.

- For a two-year period, retired teachers could teach in a school district for up to 120 days (currently 100 days).
- Allow for the establishment of a short-term substitute teaching license for applicants who hold an associate's degree or have completed at least 60 hours of credit from a regionally accredited institution of higher education.
- Allow school boards, in collaboration with the teachers' union, to jointly develop a short-term substitute teacher training program that provides individuals with short-term substitute teaching license information on curriculum, classroom management techniques, school safety, and district building operations.

- Strive for reciprocity between Illinois teacher licensing standards and the licensing standards of other states.

The Illinois Statewide Management Alliance, along with ISBE, IEA and IFT, have worked together to reach a compromise on this bill. Special thanks to Rep. Thomas Bennett and Rep. Rita Mayfield for their sponsorship and hard work on this bill. It is currently on second reading in the House.

OPPOSE

[HB 4789](#)

Sponsored by Reps. Breen (R-Lombard), Mayfield (D-Waukegan) and Morrison (R-Palatine)

The Alliance strongly opposes this bill because we believe it would be virtually impossible for school districts to comply with.

The legislation states that, beginning with the 2019-2020 school year, each district shall undertake budgetary and expenditure control actions so that the increase in each administrative expenditures, general administrative expenditures and school administration expenditures per pupil for that school year over the prior school year does not exceed the percentage increase in the CPI for the 12 months ending on the previous December 31 or 5 percent, whichever is less.

Five percent is the current law, and as you know, the CPI is typically much lower, ranging from 2.1 percent the past two years all the way down to .1 percent.

In addition, the bill redefines what is included under the cap, particularly to include principals, deans, other administrative positions and even teacher leaders.

We believe this bill is unworkable for districts on a practical level. The bill passed out of committee unanimously and is currently on the House floor. While there is an [amendment](#) pending, it does not change the intent of the legislation.

[HB 5572](#)

Sponsored by Reps. Ives (R-Wheaton), Skillicorn (R-East Dundee), Morrison (R-Palatine) and Moylan (D-Des Plaines)

This legislation would hamstring school districts by saying they cannot refinance debt past the repayment period of the debt when issued. It also says districts may not extend the debt repayment period beyond 20 years. (*Read a fact sheet about the bill [here](#)*)

This is concerning because it limits district's ability to respond to current economic climates and provide debt relief. Also troublesome is the bill would include interest and alternative revenue bonds in a school district's debt limit, both of which are currently exempted from the debt limit. No other state in the country considers interest to be part of debt.

If the legislation passed in its current form, many school districts would automatically be pushed over their debt limit, hurting their overall financial position.

The bill passed out of committee unanimously and is on second reading in the House. While there is an [amendment](#) pending, it does not change the intent of the legislation.

[SB 3418](#)

Sponsored by Senators Rezin (R-Morris) and Weaver (R-Peoria)

This bill is being referred to in the media as the superintendent sharing bill. The sponsors claim it's a way for taxpayers to save money by cutting administrative costs. It actually won't, which I'll explain later.

The legislation forces school boards to enter into a joint agreement for shared services of a superintendent or other administrator through referendum.

School boards can currently do this on their own through joint agreement, but this bill takes away local control from school boards and gives it to residents, who elected the board to represent them. The bar for this to happen isn't very steep, either. To trigger this process, a petition would only have to be signed by no less than 8 percent of school district's voters.

We believe this bill not only strips local control away from school boards, but it would also be a disaster if put into practice. The current language includes the reference to "shall," meaning school boards have to follow this directive of the voters should it pass. What if they

don't? Or, what if they cannot agree on who the superintendent will be? How about, what if the new superintendent isn't a good fit?

Those are all questions that remain unanswered. Furthermore, let me share comments noted in the media from state Sen. Daniel Biss and Waverly Superintendent Dustin Day, who nailed some of the problems on the head with the bill.

Biss, as reported by the Illinois News Network, correctly noted in committee the legislation gives voters the ability to essentially fire a superintendent. Here's his quote:

"Now imagine the English teacher who assigns a book that is controversial. There is an outcry and there is a big fight in front of the school board, as happens from time to time," Biss said. "Do you come back here and pass a bill that allows the public, by petition, to fire an English teacher?"

Day was asked about the legislation by a TV station reporter in Springfield. In addition to being superintendent, Day is also the high school and junior high principal in Waverly, a district of about 364 students in west central Illinois.

"I don't just hold the superintendent role. So, to try to squeeze time to go to a different district, to do that, it would be near impossible," Day told the TV station.

As for the saving money claim, this wouldn't happen. That's because, in reality, school boards would soon realize they need to hire another administrator to fill the void created by the shared services.

SB 3418 was approved out of committee 9-3 and is on the Senate floor.

[SB 2892/HB 5175](#)

Senate sponsors are Manar (D-Bunker Hill), Lightford (D-Maywood), Bertino-Tarrant (D-Plainfield) and Martinez (D-Chicago).

House sponsors are Hoffman (D-Swansea), Scherer (D-Decatur), Greenwood (D-East St. Louis), Flowers (D-Chicago) and Stuart (D-Edwardsville)

New teachers would be guaranteed a starting salary of at least \$40,000 under the legislation.

While it sounds great on its face to raise the salary for teachers, we oppose the legislation because we believe it should be a local decision. We also fear the bill could have unintended consequences if districts are forced to cut costs elsewhere.

This bill currently has support of teacher unions and political momentum, given the demonstrations from teachers in West Virginia, Arizona and other states.

We'll monitor and make sure our concerns are known by legislators. The bill passed out of committee 7-4 and is on the Senate floor.

NO MOVEMENT ON PENSIONS; PROPERTY TAX FREEZE ALTERNATIVE PROPOSED

A number of issues that could have a dramatic effect on your school district remain in limbo. Those include Gov. Bruce Rauner's proposal to shift pension costs to school districts, the lingering overall pension reform known as the "Consideration Model," a proposed property tax freeze and JB Pritzker's desire for a graduated income tax.

I'll keep this last part short by saying I don't believe anything will happen on any of these issues this legislative session, given it's an election year and neither party wants to give each other a victory.

This prediction also is supported by the numbers. So far, 68 lawmakers have signed [HR 27](#), saying they oppose shifting pension costs to local school districts. And for the graduated income tax, 50 lawmakers are sponsoring [HR 975](#), which oppose the idea. Remember, the latter would require a three-fifths vote. Plus, the governor would never sign it.

As for the property tax freeze, we are keeping a close eye on the recently filed [SB 2670 \(McConchie, R-Hawthorn Woods\)](#), which would give voters in counties covered by PTELL the ability to put a referendum on the ballot to lower their taxes. The idea is being pushed by Republican senators as an alternative way to freeze or lower property taxes because other proposals have stalled in the legislature.

I'll end with a reminder to contact your legislator and share your concerns on any of these important issues.

Thanks for reading.

Diane Hendren

Director of Governmental Relations

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