



Jim Broadway

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## Illinois School News Service

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### Curtain rises on 'FY 2017' budget drama Tuesday in Room 212

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Easily the most elegant public space in the [Illinois State Capitol is Room 212](#). Originally the home of the Supreme Court, it still is often the scene of high drama - as it well may be Tuesday at noon when the Senate Appropriations II Committee examines two proposals for education funding for FY 2017.

Two proposals? Yes. The Illinois State Board of Education officially recorded a vote on a budget plan for the fiscal year that begins July 1, and so did Gov. Bruce Rauner. You'd think the governor and a board whose majority he appointed would be in tight agreement in this regard. But in fact, [the proposals vary significantly](#).

They're about \$300 million apart just on their recommendations for General State Aid, for example, with the State Board proposing \$5.077 billion and Rauner countering with \$4.772 billion. Rauner's plan would fund 100% of a foundation level of \$6,119-per student; the Board's proposal pushes the FL up to \$6,329-per kid.

Where would the Board get the \$300 million? Well, they would take it from the budget line to benefit "children requiring special education services" and move it into the GSA formula. That would ease the strain on school districts with small local property tax bases, but it would siphon a ton of money from wealthier districts.

Since the board voted on the controversial Robin Hood proposal in January, Rauner has made it clear that, while he agrees there should be more "equity" in the distribution of state education funds, he will not support any proposal that results in a reduction in state funding to any district, no matter how wealthy.

Rauner's proposal would fund every "mandated categorical" line item in the ISBE budget at the same levels funded in the current fiscal year. Except for the \$300 million it proposes to divert from special education to GSA, the Board's plan pretty much also follows this year's mandated categorical program funding.

The State Board first proposed a \$75 million increase in early childhood education funding, raising it to \$393.7 million for FY 2017. Rauner included that precise amount in his budget proposal. It is otherwise on relatively small budget items (but on very many of them) that the governor and the agency disagree.

The Board wants to boost Arts and Foreign Language funding from this year's \$500,000 to \$1 million; Rauner wants to cut the line down to zero. The board wants to boost bilingual education support by \$12 million, raising it to \$75.6 million; the governor proposes even-funding that line at this year's \$63.6 million.

The board urges increases for advanced placement and agriculture education, and new funding for "low-income advanced placement"; Rauner wants zero for all three lines. The Board would bump up the \$1 million in this year's low-performing schools support all the way to \$5 million in FY 2017; Rauner proposes zero.

**What about the "Educator Quality and Support" lines for educator recruitment, mentoring, evaluation, motivation and the like - plus National Board Certification, Teach for America and Teacher of the Year programs?** The board had proposed \$10.93 million for those programs; Rauner sees each of them at zero dollars.

The Board proposed \$11.3 million (a \$5 million increase) for Regional Safe Schools; Rauner keeps them at \$6.3 million. The Board wants \$3 million for homeless education; Rauner wants zero. The Board wants \$2.4 million for After School Matters and \$15 million for a new program called "Healthy Community Incentive."

Rauner's preferences are for zero, and zero.

What will happen at noon Tuesday? State Superintendent Tony Smith or some ranking staffer from ISBE will testify as to the Board's rationale for each of the lines in their budget. Someone from the governor's office is likely to attend and give Rauner's justification for all that zeroing out that he proposes.

The [members of the Senate committee](#) will ask the witnesses questions, and many of them will probably express opinions as to the adequacy of the proposals by the State Board and by Rauner. You can get a good sense of the direction a session is likely to take, even this early on, by [monitoring budget committee hearings](#).

And, as noted, Room 212 is a very nice room, Italian Renaissance in design. The [ILStatehouse.com web site](#) points out that there's a mural on the ceiling of Room 212 depicting the "goddess of justice trampling on coins - indicating that in Illinois, justice is not for sale." (Uh-huh.) Visit that room next time you're at the Capitol.





The House PK-12 education committee on Curriculum & Policies is scheduled to convene at [10 a.m. Wednesday](#) with seven bills and a couple of resolutions posted. The hearing will be conducted in Room 114. ([You can monitor it here.](#)) It's a [nice room, Room 114 is](#), but it's not as splendid as Room 212.

[Rep. Mary Flowers](#) (D-Chicago) apparently wants to take another shot at getting [HB 119](#) out of committee. The bill would create require a highly detailed, committee-driven process that the Chicago Public Schools board would have to follow to retain students in grade. (It was amended to let other districts off the hook.)

When bills fail in committee, they usually just fail. Sponsors rarely get more than one "bite of the apple," as they say (far too often) at the Capitol. But Rep. Flowers is not just another sponsor. She's smart and articulate and can be sweet. But if you cross her, that withering stare will make you wish you hadn't.

Rep. Flowers is also sponsoring [HB 4240](#), with co-sponsor [Rep. La Shawn K. Ford](#) (D-Chicago). It is a parental responsibility bill of the first magnitude. An adult with custody of a child who permits the child to "persist in his or her truancy" could be forced into counseling or into a parent-education course if found guilty.

There may be nothing harder for a school board to do than to close a school. [Rep. Margo McDermid](#) (R-Frankfort) wants to make it even harder with [HB 4322](#), requiring a board to set up a school closure committee to hold hearings and otherwise study a closure proposal - and to take the committee's recommendation into consideration when the board "makes its final decision." Actually listen to the committee? That's a pretty tough bill.

[HB 4352](#), which would codify a definition of dyslexia, is sponsored by [Rep. Patricia Bellock](#) (R-Westmont), who also is the sponsor of [HB 4367](#), reestablishing the Illinois Reading Advisory Group and extending its deadline to report its findings to the General Assembly by one year, to December 31, 2016.

[HB 4472](#), sponsored by [Rep. Tom Demmer](#) (R-Rochelle) would add Bureau Valley CUSD 340 to the long list of district that, under specific circumstances, would be permitted to exceed what would otherwise be its bonded debt limit. [HB 5901](#), filed by [Rep. Will Guzzardi](#) (D-Chicago) would require school districts and the State Board of Education to provide parents and the general public with district-level information about the administration of student assessments.

[Rep. Katherine Cloonen](#) (D-Kankakee) is sponsoring [HR 967](#), designating February as Career and Technical Education Month" in Illinois. [Rep. Linda Chapa LaVia](#) (D-Aurora) sponsors [HJR 127](#), which (if the Senate agrees) would direct an existing task force to study the credentialing of foreign language interpreters.

**Dusty Rhodes explains it all.** I can't recommend too strongly that you access [the writings of Dusty Rhodes](#), the education writer for Illinois Issues Magazine whose work is posted on the WUIS public radio web site. (WUIS and Illinois Issues are media properties of the University of Illinois Springfield.)

Today I'm calling your attention to Dusty's most recent effort, an analysis of "[What Comes After No Child Left Behind?](#)" As with all of her exceptional writing, this work is clear, it probes in depth, it includes the views of Illinois experts, folks you know from the front lines of educational policy creation at the Capitol.

You'll notice that you can either read the article for yourself, or you can sit back, relax and allow it to be read to you in an audio clip that runs just under four minutes. I'm not going to spoil it for you by revealing the conclusions Dusty's sources reach as to the nature of our post-NCLB education policy environment.

For folks who value objectivity, you'll find a meritorious lack of bias in Dusty's writing. She would never say anything like, "NCLB was not the dumbest thing President W. Bush ever did, but it ranks right up there." No, that would be me saying that. Dusty will let you draw that conclusion (or whatever) for yourself.

**Input from ISNS readers:** In reaction to an item in Tuesday's issue about proposed curriculum mandates, an ISNS reader expressed some frustration. "I don't understand legislators proposing ... more burdens on school districts [when most schools] are at bare bones right now and have cut programs and staff."

To this reader, the only goal for legislators should be "to get our financial mess under control. Until that happens, districts can't implement new programs while they are just trying to keep their heads above water."

Another reader reacted to [HB 4365](#) a bill to require the Illinois High School Association to [record every concussion](#) suffered at events it sponsors and to report the data annually to the General Assembly:

*Doesn't it make sense that high school sports which, compile a lot of statistics per athlete per game (such as interceptions, incomplete passes, tackles etc.) could easily add a few more columns to the spreadsheets?*

*I'm thinking headers like Possible head contact, confirmed (Y/N); Evaluated by, removed from play (Y/N); reported by... I do think that this mandate, if properly reported, would enable valid, scientific analysis down the road IF the reporting is standardized and implemented across the board in all sports.*

*Our children, young adults and beyond are generating big sums for others who depend upon the sport for material gain or employment. Comparing unpaid students participating to successfully paid pro athletes, I would say that it is up to the legislature to seriously consider this mandate, unfunded or not.*

*Perhaps, funding should come from a tax on higher education "games." I use "should" instead of "could" because the institutions that are monetarily benefitting should pay their share of raw material costs.*

*Spectators should pay, too. What price for this enterprise or enjoyment? Who should pay? You know, business costs and all that. These are not just games for fun. Schools, traveling leagues and colleges are all effectively using kids like we breathe air - a free commodity. I think HB 4365 should be carefully considered.*

I think she makes some strong points.

**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](#).