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**Fwd: IASB 'arm-the-teachers' vote stirs opposition**

1 message

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Mon, Oct 28, 2019 at 7:42 AM

November Board Meeting

----- Forwarded message -----

From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>  
Date: Mon, Oct 28, 2019 at 4:09 AM  
Subject: IASB 'arm-the-teachers' vote stirs opposition  
To: <jbauer@panaschools.com>

[Subscribe to ISNS](#)Volume 25, Number 61, October 28, 2019 --- [Education bills signed into law - or vetoed - [at this link.](#)]To view the web version, [click here](#).**IASB 'arm-the-teachers' vote stirs opposition**

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Apparently reasoning that last year's vote on the issue was inconclusive, the Illinois Association of School Boards has decided to decide again the question of whether the organization should encourage Illinois policymakers to amend the School Code and allow teachers be armed as a defense against school shooters.

Last year's *vote was inconclusive*. Members at the IASB conference in Chicago last November defeated the proposal by just 24 votes out of more than 1,000 cast. Regardless of the merits of the proposed resolution, to revisit it this year offers an opportunity to make the organization's position clearer, more emphatic.

In spite of the facts that [school shootings are very rare](#), that rarer still are school shootings in which the shooter is not a current or former student at the school, and that [teachers overwhelmingly object](#) to arming fellow teachers, and that it is opposed by respected [organizations](#) - the IASB vote November 23 is *likely to be close again*.

But the opponents are campaigning. The [League of Women Voters of Illinois](#) has taken a leading role in arguing against arming teachers. Research shows adding guns to a chaotic scene adds to the danger for everyone, as the League notes. And besides that, there are better, more proven, ways to reduce the danger.

**With such opposition why should the vote be close?** Most Illinoisans live in urban and suburban areas, where arming teachers is most opposed. But district population

patterns put most school board members - and their votes - in more rural areas, where guns *per se* are not feared but, rather, are valued in the culture.

In any case, for the IASB-considered resolution to become law the legislature and Gov. JB Pritzker would have to approve it. That is unlikely. Legislative districts, unlike school districts, are designed to have equal populations. Most legislators represent urban and suburban areas, where resistance to arming teachers is greatest.

So other school safety measures must be considered. Illinois already has a "[red flag law](#)," allowing guns to be taken from dangerous and unstable persons. Implementation is a challenge, but efforts are under way. A revision to gun ownership policy ([SB 1966](#)) is currently pending. It is divisive but [has gathered support](#).

Proponents of arming teachers make the point that unlike urban areas, where an emergency call can bring responses in just a few minutes, rural schools often are dangerously far from police or sheriff's offices. But that argument assumes a greater likelihood of intrusion - especially by a stranger - than research suggests.

It points to the need for strong red flag laws, for diligent, observant counselors and for excellent communication between students who know (as they always do) that a peer "has a problem" and educators who can address the problem. The NRA plan, a "[good guy with a gun](#)," has been shown to be a dangerous strategy.

**The ISNS position:** Policymakers had to enforce laws against thoughtless driving that injures workers in road work zones by imposing penalties of [\\$10,000 in fines and 14 years in prison](#). Similar policy may be needed to get a thoughtless gun owner to *secure their guns* from others who might inflict harm.

(The Morton father who returned an assault rifle to his diagnosed as mentally ill son was [more to blame](#) than the son for the deaths that followed.)

**The House and Senate are to reconvene today.** It is the first of six "veto session" days. The House will commence floor action at noon and the Senate at 1:30 ([see top left corner](#)). Of the 599 bills legislators passed in the spring, the governor vetoed only eight. But that doesn't mean there will be nothing to do.

Of the vetoed bills, the legislators are likely to address his action on only one of them. [HB 3222](#) would transfer various parcels of state property to other governmental units and, in one case, to a private foundation. Pritzker thinks giving state land to the foundation without cost or safeguards is unfair to others.

The sharp-eyed governor therefore struck out the language making that transfer - as an "amendatory veto." Legislators may accept his change by simple-majority votes - or override it by three-fifths majority votes. Any other action (including no action) would kill the bill completely. (They will accept JB's change.)

There are other issues pending, of course. Floor action on SB 1966, the FOID proposal, is possible, of course, but it seems more likely to wait - for the next mass shooting, either in Illinois or elsewhere in the country, or for 2021. Legislation so divisive, politically, is more difficult to enact with elections on the horizon.

**The House apparently plans to be busy.** Eleven [committee hearings](#) are scheduled. The PK-12 education appropriations committee will discuss [HB 3917](#), a measure directing Chicago Public Schools to distribute English-learner and special education funding to its schools as the evidence-based funding law intends.

House members this month filed amendments to 23 bills that are in the custody of their chamber. Not all are listed below. Only those that seem education- or youth-related (or that otherwise interest me) are included:

[HB 333](#): Amendment 1 would clarify the text of a bill calling for non-probation of juveniles for offenses involving "use or possession of a firearm" if probation for such an

offense has been sentenced in the past.

**HB 3883:** Amendment 1 would permit the Department of Revenue to suspend the license of a distributor that violates the state's ban on the distribution of flavored tobacco products, which are typically marketed to children.

**HB 3888:** A very complicated Amendment 1 would phase out the use of ethylene oxide, a chemical used to clean medical equipment that has been identified as a carcinogen. Illinois, Colorado and Michigan have taken action following a federal EPA report, but Georgia ignored the report and [did not inform the public](#) about it.

The "EO" issue has focused on Lake County where the company that leaked the chemical - and [claimed it is not a hazard](#) anywhere in Illinois - has closed down and will not reopen. Now the federal EPA seems to be [trying to "walk back"](#) on its original warning about the dangers of ethylene oxide. What else is new?

**SB 557:** House amendment 1 to this bill also deals with the ethylene oxide issue. Why would the same sponsor use two different bills on the same issue? It adds to the certainty. (Bills can be derailed easily in this process.)

**HB 3904:** Amendment 1 provides that college student athletes cannot be prevented from receiving compensation for the use of their names and likenesses, but such compensation may not be offered to "prospective" students.

**SB 10:** Originally, this was a bill about minimum salaries for teachers, but that passed in another bill. Now this bill has an amendment pending that would create a process for resolving a special education dispute in Chicago Public Schools. Nothing about the bill, currently, relates to the teachers' strike at CPS.

**SB 730:** Another switcheroo. This bill is apparently no longer needed to codify certain suicide prevention training policy. House amendment 1 turns it into a shell bill dealing with the Comptroller's office.

**SB 1042:** House amendment 1 would extend to the 35th year a Tax Increment Financing (TIF) district in Savanna; typically, TIF districts keep some property tax revenue from reaching the school districts where they are located.

**SB 1698:** House amendment 2 to this bill, which originally had to do with broadcasting pension system board meetings, now appears to let some retiree get paid for a part-time job for which current law would not allow payment. It seems to be "special" legislation in that regard, but for whom? It will not be clear.

While the Senate has no committee hearings scheduled today, and while the senators seem to have filed no amendments or taken any other recent action relating to bills, I'm confident something constructive will occur in that chamber.

What's next? After they adjourn Wednesday, the House and Senate will be off until November 12-14, the second half of the veto session. It seems unlikely that complications will require any other session days this year, so after November 14 there will be a break until the 2020 session starts in early January.

**While no strike-related Chicago Public School** legislation is apparent on the legislature's agenda at this time, the strike that's halted classes there for more than a week - today will be the 9th day - is of course a matter of concern to legislators whether they represent districts included in the Windy City or not.

The news late Sunday was not positive. Going into the weekend there was apparently some optimism that a breakthrough could occur. But the talks were said to have "stalled" on Saturday. The cost of adding nurses and counselors and other supports for students, plus capping class sizes, is in dispute.

Chicago Teachers Union argues that the CPS board inflates its estimates of the costs. Another sticking point is that the union wants whatever is agreed to on these issues to be put "in writing" and authoritatively signed. You wouldn't think the board would object to that, but apparently it does.

Classes won't happen today, but students can still go to school. There they will be served breakfasts and lunches and get food to take home for dinner. They'll be supervised by non-union employees of the district. The public transit system will take them to school and back home without charge.

In recent years, Chicago school strikes have been rare and relatively brief. The last strike, in 2012, was quite bitter, but the current strike is already the longest disruption of classes at CPS since 1987, according to the [Chicago Sun-Times](#).

**Why is the legislature even in session today?** Ordinarily, veto session weeks begin on a Tuesday. But there's three days in a veto session week and, I'm guessing, the Monday start is a gesture to legislators who have children or grandchildren to have fun with - and also to help keep safe - on Thursday, which is Halloween.

It's an interesting "holiday," one with kind of a dark past that has just grown darker during my lifetime. When I was young, parents didn't have to worry much about keeping kids safe on Halloween. We went trick-or-treating in groups without any parents riding herd. Our tricks were pretty mean as I recall. (Don't ask.)

But now, as history professor W. Scott Poole writes, Halloween is the nation's "[most dangerous holiday](#)." Yes, I remember. It was in the 1970s. My older son was younger than 10 when we started to read about children injured, or even poisoned, by Halloween "treats" that had been tampered with.

As Poole reminds us, by 1980 valid research had found those early tampering stories to be essentially false, just "urban legends."

Historical events, now related in an often disrespectful way to Halloween, were not urban legends but were sadly true. Even up into 17th century America, tens of thousands, up to 100,000 - *almost all of them women* - were killed, hanged or burned at the stake, accused of witchcraft. [Professor Bridget Marshall](#) explains this one. (This does render lame the charge we so often hear that a lawful inquiry is a "witch hunt.")

**Lighter note: The wise Halloween shopper sticks with Twix.** Depending on how many little ghouls you expect Thursday night, you might save a bundle if you give the tricksters *groceries* (like Twix and Twizzlers) instead of *candies* (such as Reese's, gummi worms or milk chocolate bars). The reason? Sales taxes.

A law professor at the University of Richmond [describes the hodge-podge](#) of state sales tax laws as they are applied to Halloween treats, *and he uses Illinois* as a state where it can be "devilishly hard" to make fiscally prudent decisions. Why don't all sales tax rates apply evenly on all purchases?

The varying rates are driven by the inherent regressivity of the sales tax. Rates are the same for everyone, but the burden is far greater on a low-income family (\$2,000/month income) than on a richer one (\$12,000/month). Everyone must eat, so some states lift the burden a bit on the poor by lowering the tax on groceries.

Is anything you can eat a grocery item? In some states, perhaps, but not in Illinois. Our the 6.25% state sales tax on most things drops to 1% on groceries. But "candy" is not a grocery item. It is not a "necessity." So the 6.25% sales tax applies to candy. But chocolate bars or Twizzlers - are they not candy? *How can you know?*

It's in the "Rate of tax" section of Illinois' [sales tax law](#), which states: "'Candy' does not include any preparation that contains flour or requires refrigeration." There are other complexities. The sales tax burden is also relieved for purchases of OTC drugs - but not for other products you may get at a pharmacy.

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