



Jim Broadway

Jim Broadway's

Illinois School News Service

Honest coverage of Illinois education policy since 1995

A civics seminar for public school advocates



Subscribe

Copyright 2018 (c) James Broadway All Rights Reserved

Volume 24, Number 37, June 1, 2018

Legislators go both ways on school safety

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Not much today. Just a few notes on the now concluded, syrupy bipartisan, legislative session has finally concluded with some key accomplishments: (1) a balanced budget that seems strongly pro-education, (2) ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution and (3) no major gubernatorial mistakes.

Going into the session, the legislators had concerns about school safety, concerns that were dramatically heightened by tragic school shootings in Florida and Texas. Which way would they turn? Some urged hardening the schools, arming the teachers, preparing for gunfights. Others urged a softer approach, more reliance on education professionals, counselors, psychologists, more efforts to make the students feel safe and to open up when they don't.

In some ways, the policymakers responded to both sets of recommendations. No, they did not resolve to turn teachers into armed police, but they did require the excellent Illinois State Police training academy to develop a course for police who are stationed in schools ([SB 2925](#)), and they passed a bill to require that drills be conducted in all schools annually, drills that would include preparation for what to do in the event of an "active shooter" ([SB 2350](#)).

All this seems especially appropriate now that an American corporation has decided it will be profitable to market video games that are graphically set in a school that is under attack - games that *allow players to assume the identity* of an "active shooter" and earn points for killing as many children and teachers as possible. [NOTE: Backlash from the public recently has convinced the corporation that there's no profit in it after all.]

Policymakers also took the softer, more complicated, perhaps more expensive but - based on actual research - also the approach more likely to lead to truly safer schools, to prevention of (rather than responses to) violent incidents. [HB 4208](#) creates the "Safe Schools and Healthy Learning Environment Program."

HB 4208 would create a grant program - subject to appropriations, of course - targeting schools whose students are most likely to receive out-of-school suspensions, or even to be arrested at the schools. Grants would be available to fund highly detailed remedial plans, consciously conceived efforts to address bad behaviors.

Both bills will be delivered to Gov. Bruce Rauner within 30 days (per the constitution), and he will have 60 days in which to review them and decide to sign or veto them. It is not an either-or situation; Rauner is most likely to sign both into law. The simple one has crowd appeal; the complicated one is unfunded at the moment.

The legislators entered the spring session with 268 bills pending that would alter the School Code in some ways. Most of those bills faltered. [Only 64 of them survived so far](#). None have gone to Rauner yet, but they all will pretty soon. In the meantime, we will have much to consider in the coming weeks and months.

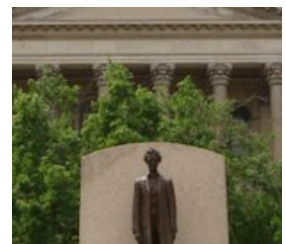
Rauner has indicated that he will sign the FY 2019 budget bill ([HB 109](#)) soon after he receives it from the legislative branch. Just as I predicted. He likes the budget. It is balanced and it funds all the required expenses - debt, pensions, healthcare, prisons - and covers a fairly decent menu of ongoing state programs and services. There are no new taxes or fees involved; economic growth is the only source of new revenue, and that is about \$1 billion.

Bipartisan? The House [concurred 97-18](#) Thursday, after the Senate built it an [passed it 56-2](#) (!) on Wednesday. (Amazing, isn't it, how legislators can become so friendly after some of them have the guts to make sufficient revenue flow.) For ISBE, huge [growth in evidence-based funding and early childhood](#) education is the headline. Most other line items were the same for FY 2019 as they are this year, except for a few that were reduced.

The governor should keep his head down on this issue as he moves toward the November elections. The budget bill that he now likes so much relies heavily on the \$5 billion in revenue that was generated by the tax increase enacted last year over his veto, a tax hike he pledged to get repealed. But he proposed using every dollar.

There were a few vetoes, but the fall legislative session - November 13-15 and 27-29 - will be a post-election adjustment period, a time for consideration of policy that the legislators feel is important but may have been a bit too volatile for an enactment before the voters get to rate their job performance.

We will begin next week a more in-depth review and commentary on the various categories of education policy addressed in bills that passed this session. Certainly, there is much to consider. Then after next week, ISNS publications will decline in



frequency, down to one newsletter or so per week. Hope you enjoyed the session. - Jim

Links to newsletters posted so far this year are available [at this RECENTLY CHANGED web page link](#). Please remember that *current* ISNS archives are for our subscribers only; *do not share this link*. Also, all 2017 issues can be found [HERE](#). You *may share the 2017 archives web page link* with anyone who wants to see it.

The only way to contact me: Use the link below. As soon as you "submit" your message, it is sent to me by email. Your message may be complex and "attached" to a document, or it may be as simple as "call me." IF YOU NEED TO SPEAK WITH ME directly, leave a phone number for me to call and tell me what would be a good time to converse. I am always connected to my email, and I promise to respond to you as soon as possible.

Invoice Reminder: All invoices are *emailed* via the PNC Bank. ISNS is *now paperless*. If you need me to resend an invoice, use the contact link to tell me. I deeply appreciate your support of ISNS. This service cannot exist without you.

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