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Fwd: Alliance Legislative Report 100-33

1 message

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

Fri, Jul 28, 2017 at 10:50 PM

August board packet information.

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: IASA <iasa@iasaedu.org>
Date: July 28, 2017 at 4:44:57 PM CDT
To: jbauer@panaschools.com
Subject: Alliance Legislative Report 100-33
Reply-To: iasa@iasaedu.org

July 28, 2017



ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE REPORT (100-33)

SPECIAL SESSION PRODUCES NO RESULTS THIS WEEK

Last week, **Governor Bruce Rauner** called for a special legislative session to address school funding reform. Lawmakers were called back to the Capitol on Wednesday, and then subsequently met again on Thursday and Friday. Each day both the Senate and House of Representatives convened briefly, allowed a few statements from lawmakers on their respective chamber floors, then adjourned without taking any substantive action. The House is scheduled to return on Monday; the Senate did not set any specific date for return but is anticipated to return on Monday as well.

The Problem

At issue is the lack of authority to appropriate funds for Illinois' elementary and secondary schools. After enacting (via an override of the Governor's veto) budget and revenue bills last month, a full statewide budget was put in place for the first time in over two years. However, a provision in the appropriations bill, SB 6, stated that funding for general education spending must be distributed through an evidence-based funding model. Since no such formula is currently on the State's books, funds cannot flow and K-12 schools are essentially without general funding as August begins.

SB 1 contains an evidence-based funding model, and it was approved by the General Assembly in May. Because of the Governor's pledge to veto the bill, the Senate has never transmitted the bill to the Governor's office. Rauner has called for the Senate to release the bill and put it on his desk so he can make changes through an amendatory veto. **Senate President John Cullerton** has requested that meetings take place in advance of sending the bill so compromise can be reached.

Cullerton has recently stated that he will send SB 1 to the Governor on Monday. If so, this will begin the process of negotiations between the Republican governor and Democratic legislative leaders to find common ground so education funding can be secured.

The Reasoning

Though the Governor has not revealed exactly what he would change in SB 1, it likely will include revisions to provisions that assist Chicago Public Schools (CPS) in making teacher pension payments. Late amendments in the House were added to the Senate bill that would build CPS pension costs into the funding formula. The Governor and most Republicans worry that this will drain resources from downstate school districts. Most Democrats state that this is an equitable formula that treats all school districts the same and holds everyone harmless.

The Options

Legislatively, there are options to resolve the conflict. An agreed compromise could be worked out and enacted through a structured amendatory veto of SB 1 that is then accepted by both legislative chambers. Both the House and Senate could override the Governor's veto of SB 1 thereby enacting the bill as currently drafted. SB 1 could be allowed to die through a veto and compromise language could be amended onto another viable bill that is approved and signed by the Governor. Theoretically, any of these options could be completed in a matter of days.

Politically, this is a much more troublesome conundrum. Trust between the Governor and Democratic leadership is nearly nonexistent. The issue has become a lightning rod of partisan political acrimony.

The Impact

August is the time that parents, educators, and communities begin to prepare for the "back to school" season. Since there is no uniform school calendar in the State that sets the date for the opening day of classes, school districts will be opening sporadically throughout the first several weeks of August. Without any funding through a general state aid formula, some districts may not have the resources on hand to open their doors. Others will be able to open, but will only be capable of continuing for a limited amount of time. Each district will have to weigh its options considering cash reserves, property tax receipts, available borrowing authority, contractual obligations, and many other factors.

This is an impossible position in which to place school administrators, school boards, parents, communities, and students. Alliance members are encouraged to contact their legislators and urge them to resolve this crisis as soon as possible.

This legislative report was written and edited by the lobbyists of the Illinois Association of School Boards to provide information to the members of the organizations that comprise the Statewide School Management Alliance.

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