



Fwd: Will policy now be shaped by both parties?

1 message

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Mon, Apr 8, 2019 at 7:39 AM

April Board Meeting

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From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>
Date: Mon, Apr 8, 2019 at 7:26 AM
Subject: Will policy now be shaped by both parties?
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Volume 25, Number 24, April 8, 2019

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Will policy now be shaped by *both* parties?

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

In the years preceding the administration of Gov. Bruce Rauner, members of the General Assembly - committee members representing both political parties - actually played meaningful roles in passing bills and deciding details of the budget. At the start of each session, they agreed on allocation percentages, for example.

Then partisan stress gripped the Capitol like a fist. Thus the Great Impasse.

But that's all in the past. Even though Democrats hold insurmountable power in the policy process, nothing would be gained for them to simply shut the Republicans out. House [Speaker Michael Madigan](#) (who is also Illinois Democratic Party chairman), is no fool. Under current conditions, he'll foster maximum comfort for all.

Current conditions are much to his liking. Why make waves?

For example, consider the [pending education appropriation](#). Madigan is the sponsor of [a bill for that](#); House Republican Leader [Rep. Jim Durkin](#) also [has one](#). House Majority Leader [Rep. Greg Harris](#), second in authority only to Madigan, also sponsors such a bill. (All education budget bills but one originated in the House.)

[HB 3774](#) (Harris) is probably the main budget bill. All the blanks are already filled in with Gov. JB Pritzker's proposals. But one of Durkin's bills seems likely to be used for a significant education appropriation. The other sponsors? Their bills may not be used, but I'd never bet against [Rep. Mary Flowers](#) and her [HB 3629](#).

Both bills calling for "efficient" school districts - that is, districts resulting from *lots of consolidation* - rely (or soon will rely) on merging elementary districts with the high school districts they feed into, to create *unit* districts. [HB 3053](#) already does that; [SB 1838](#) has pending amendments to that effect.

HB 3053 is already in the Senate. SB 1838 will likely cross over to the House by Friday. All committee and floor votes have been unanimously positive. Significantly, both still

give district voters the right to maintain the status quo in their districts. So they're a *step in the direction* of consolidation, but not the whole trip.

[SB 2075](#), the bill to lower the age of compulsory school attendance from 6 to 5, is still in the Senate. But an amendment was filed Friday; once it is adopted (perhaps Tuesday), the bill can be voted over to the House. That seems likely, even though the Republican caucus appears to oppose it.

The Senate Education Committee was [split along partisan lines](#) when the school age-lowering bill was approved 11-5 on March 19. But SB 2075 has a forceful sponsor in [Sen. Kimberly Lightford](#). She holds a Senate leadership position now, and she displays rare tactical skills as she works to advance her bills.

Does Friday make a difference? As I've told you, probably a half-dozen times, Friday is the deadline for bills to pass out of their chamber of origin - or die. This rule applies to all bills - except when the sponsors can persuade Madigan or Cullerton to extend the deadlines. (Republicans wrote the rule allowing this in the '90s.)

Both bills that seek to abolish the State Charter School Commission are in their chamber of origin, but it seems likely that at least one will meet Friday's deadline to be passed to the second chamber. [SB 1226](#) received [bipartisan support](#) in the Senate Education Committee, but [HB 2100](#) survived a [bit of committee partisanship](#).

Both bills have amendments, filed but not adopted. It is certain that charter advocates have generated as much pressure as possible to stop HB 2100 and SB 1226, but the "charter movement" has been slow to grow outside the City of Chicago. Look for amendments to be adopted and at least one of the bills to pass.

Even if the SCSC is abolished, charter schools will remain. [HB 3659](#) addresses that reality by requiring every charter school governing board to include a parent or guardian of a student currently enrolled, and requiring all charter board members to undergo leadership training. The bill soared from the House 111-0 last week.

Committee deadlines trimmed the number to just four bills in the "[district finances](#)" segment of the ISNS bill-tracking web page - and all of them have reached the second chamber.

[HB 247](#) is a negotiated bill on how a day of pupil attendance will be calculated for funding purposes; [HB 2209](#) requires tax increment financing (TIF) district information to be added to property tax bills; [HB 3244](#) would allow a county to share with school resource officers tax dollars currently allotted to school facilities; [SB 1461](#) allows voters in school districts getting resources far in excess of their "adequacy" targets to vote on a tax rate reduction.

The "[education personnel](#)" section of the ISNS bill-tracking leaves much to be done by the House and Senate with regard to education policy this week. There are 23 bills at that link - several of them quite controversial - and only 10 of them have made it across the Capitol Rotunda to the second chamber.

The chamber location of successful House bills is the Senate, of course, and that of Senate bills is the House. Locations of bills now in second chamber are similarly color-coded throughout the ISNS bill-tracking web page. There are bills about a minimum wage for teachers, licensure requirements and evaluations - the whole gamut.

Snippets:

Age to buy tobacco now is 21. Gov. Pritzker signed [HB 345](#) into law on Sunday, making it illegal for anyone under 21 years of age to purchase [cigarettes or other tobacco products](#), including "e-cigarettes." The bill had passed the [House](#) and [Senate](#) with strong majorities, despite some mostly GOP opposition.

Some opponents claimed sales would fall, hurting the economy and the state's revenue flow, as smokers would go to other states for their fix. They said the same thing when Illinois raised the tax on cigarettes by \$1 per pack in 2012. Tax revenue rose from \$577 million that year to over \$813 million in 2013.

Tax handbook update released: The tax data above is found in the [Illinois Tax Handbook for Legislators](#) (pp. 14-15), which you can download as a pdf document. Its most recent update and release was just last month. The tax rates, yearly revenue and analyses are so current that even 2018 data are included.

Illinois has many revenue streams. Did you know the tire user fee is \$2.50 per tire? That sent \$17.9 million into the state coffers last year. That means 7,160,000 tires were sold in our state. The fee hasn't changed since 2003! What if it were doubled? Would everyone go to Indiana for their tires? ([Look here for good info.](#))

Why aren't Illinois' rich guys moving to South Carolina? The "[tax credit scholarship](#)" voucher scam is in the news again. Illinois is one of 17 states that give wealthy folks credit against their tax liability if they donate to organizations that give "scholarships" to parents who shift their kids from public to private schools.

At best it's a license to decide how money that belongs to all state citizens will be spent. But [in 10 states](#), the "donors" can make a profit on the deal, through breaks they get on both their state *and federal* tax liabilities. I've explained this before, but it's more aptly explicated [in this document](#). (See chart on page 6.)

How will a \$5 billion federal "[scholarship](#)" program affect that?

Who's trying to push Chicago out of the state? [HR 101](#), co-sponsored by five Republicans, simply would urge "the United States Congress to declare the City of Chicago the 51st state of the United States of America and separate it from the rest of Illinois." Of course, it would have no effect in law even if the resolution were adopted.

Without Chicago, of course, Illinois would mostly resemble Mississippi, economically. Contrary to claims by some downstate "leaders," Chicagoans pay more to the state than they receive in state services; collar counties get an even worse deal than that. But the 96 "downstate" [counties make out like bandits](#).

Who wants Chicago out of Illinois? [It's the gun-dealers, of course.](#)

These special ISNS features will be updated regularly: the [bill-tracking web page](#) showing the status of viable bills that could affect public education policy, and a page of links to all [ISNS newsletters so far delivered](#) in 2019. (The URL for these pages was changed April 1, so only ISNS readers can access them.)

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