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Senate passes budget bill, House ratifies ERA

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

It's not over yet. The House has not yet acted on the nearly 1,300-page budget bill that passed the Senate overwhelmingly Wednesday. So there's still time for partisan gridlock to gum up the works. But that is not predicted. A smooth transition to election-year campaigning is predicted. The House will agree with the Senate today.

What does that mean for school funding? The [media accounts have varied](#), but it does seem that a bump of at least \$400 million, compared with the current fiscal year's appropriation, is carried in [HB 109](#). Evidence-based funding seems to get an increase of \$381 million (a tad more than Gov. Bruce Rauner proposed) and early childhood education would increase by \$50 million. (Sure, that totals more than \$400 million, but that's early analysis for you.)

Only [Sen. Tim Bivens](#) (R-Dixon) and [Sen. Kyle McCarter](#) (R-Vandalia) managed to vote "no" on the bill. (Both are in their final year as legislators. Neither will be missed next year.) [Sen. Dan McConchie](#) (R-Lake Zurich) just didn't cast a vote. But the other 19 Republicans joined all 37 Democrats in support of the \$38.5 billion budget.

All that's needed now is a House vote to concur with the Senate amendments to HB 109 and the bill will be on its way to Rauner's desk for his consideration. Will he sign it? Apparently, his office has not indicated his position. But to veto it or to play any games with it would invite political disaster for him. Yes, he'll sign it.

It will be a few days before the exact impact of the bill has been accounted for and, with respect to education, posted on the Illinois State Board of Education's web site, but here are *some* (but not all) of the appropriations expressed in the clear details of [Senate Amendment 2](#), a 1,245-page attachment to HB 109:

District Broadband Expansion project, \$700,000; "Southwest Organizing Project Parent Mentoring Program," \$2 million; "one-time, per capita grants to alternative schools, safe 13 schools, and alternative learning opportunities programs," \$5.4 million; district consolidation, \$3.1 million; CTE, \$38 million; TAOEP, \$11.5 million;

Regional Safe Schools, \$6.3 million; agriculture education grants, \$5 million; After School Matters, \$2.4 million; advanced placement classes, \$500,000; Teach for America, \$977,000; "one-time, per capita grants to alternative schools, safe 13 schools, and alternative learning opportunities programs," \$5.4 million;

Evidence-based funding, \$6,836,163,200. (This, of course, is the line item for which [ISBE had proposed over \\$13 billion](#), an amount required if the "adequacy" goal were to be reached this year instead of moving to it incrementally by 2027. Rauner had proposed \$6.834 billion, only a couple of million less than the bill allocates.)

More detail and analysis tomorrow, if the House follows through.

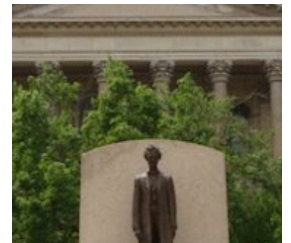
While the Senate was all warm and fuzzy with the spirit of bipartisanship Wednesday, the House was engaged in furious (and mostly partisan) bickering as the legislators debated controversial proposals. But none was more controversial than [SJRC 4](#), a resolution to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution.

After the Senate ratified it pretty easily in April ([got 43 votes, needed only 36](#)), the House barely reached the three-fifths majority required ([got 72 votes, needed only 71](#)). The debate raged for almost exactly two hours. It seemed as if every member of the chamber had something to say that needed to be recorded.

The differences were not entirely partisan. A number of Democrats opposed the resolution, but the majority party strongly supported ERA ratification. A number of Republicans spoke eloquently in favor of the resolution, but the minority party was severely divided on the issue. The outcome was uncertain for this dramatic debate.

What happens now? Since it is a resolution and not a bill, SJRC 4 does not go to Rauner's desk. Governors play no role in constitutional amendment resolutions. Illinois now is just, officially, the 37th state to ratify the ERA. If just one more state does it, women will be on equal constitutional footing with men in the U.S., right?

Well, not quite. Years of litigation would be initiated. Was the last "deadline" for ratification final? Must it be changed? What about the five states that voted early to ratify and subsequently (they turned "red") tried to change their mind, tried to "unratify"? The drama will continue, probably past my expiration date.



Anything else controversial? The House passed a bill to raise the age of eligibility to buy tobacco products to 21. Advocates said it will add years to children's lives. Opponents (border county representatives) said the money lost by local businesses in their areas matters more than those kids lives.

The House also passed a bill requiring a 72-hour "waiting period" for buying firearms. Although there's nothing much more controversial than that, the bill got da veto-proof 74 votes in the House.

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