



Jim Broadway

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Urgently needed understanding now possible

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

[Watch [District U-46 CEO Tony Sanders' message](#) on SB 1.]

The moment of truth is at hand. House action on [SB 1](#) - possibly as soon as tomorrow - will determine the quality of public education in Illinois for many years to come. The vote on Gov. Bruce Rauner's "amendatory veto" of the bill will have the most impact on school policy of *any vote Illinois House members will cast* in their careers.

But it will not be an easy vote for even the most thoughtful of them. The text of SB 1 in its final form is long and complex. It is profoundly different from the school funding formula used by the state for decades. The effects of Rauner's veto have just added to the confusion. Fortunately, illumination has just been provided.

[You must read this document.](#) You must make sure your state representatives have read it. They can do it. It is brief. (Your senators have already finished their work on SB 1, and very successfully; don't bother them about it.) What members of the House do with SB 1 will set the course of public education in Illinois far into the future.

You'll have to pay attention to House floor action tomorrow - and, this time, *you'll have to tell me* what was said and how they voted. For reasons noted below, I won't be able to monitor the debate and parse the commentary for you. Just link to the [House webcast page](#) and watch the drama. You'll do fine.

What is this important document about? It is a brief (less than 3 pages) explanation of how Rauner's veto of SB 1 just destroys the basic purpose of the bill, which is to build a flow of state support that would, within a decade, make sure that every child in every school district can receive an adequate education.

State support under SB 1 would be focused intensely on schoolchildren who most need it (based on demographic and other factors) and, in a sense, on school districts that deserve it (based on adaptations to "best practices" identified in the bill). In all, there are 27 factors that would influence what a district receives.

But Rauner's amendatory veto destroys the potential benefits of SB 1 in six ways, as explained by the Center for Tax and Budget Accountability, the bipartisan fiscal policy analysis organization which produced the document that was posted on its web site just on Monday. (But [you clicked this link](#) so you know that, right?)

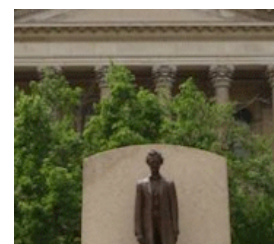
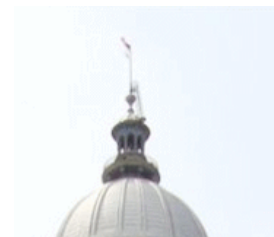
For example, Rauner's action would block growth in school support based on economic indicators, which witnesses have testified in committee would render the process outdated in its first year. And Rauner would ignore the effects of PTELL and TIF laws - falsely assuming districts can tax the affected property.

The information is there, and it is clearly presented. Now you must read it. You should also print a copy and make sure it is delivered or faxed to your state representative's office as early as possible - *today*. Of the reasons why some of them will vote "wrong" on an override of Rauner's veto, *ignorance should not be one* of them.

What is the policy process in this regard? There may be some educational preliminaries. Notice that a committee hearing is [scheduled for 9 a.m. tomorrow](#). (You can monitor it, too.) It is on an amendment to SB 1947, an amendment that would, if passed (but it won't be passed), codify in law Rauner's amendatory veto language.

I believe this is intended to reinforce the information as to how destructive an amateur governor's ideas can be. It will also make it clear to legislators who would vote against a motion to override Rauner's veto that such a vote will be described (politically) as support of that veto and support of *its demonstrably harmful effects*.

When the House turns its attention directly to SB 1, it will be to consider [Rep. William Davis'](#) (D-East Hazel Crest) motion that SB 1 be enacted as passed, without regard to Rauner's "recommendations for change." It is the only motion possible. Failure to get 71 votes to pass that motion *means SB 1 just died*.



Will your state representative know how you stand on SB 1? If you're unsure about this, today is the only day for you to make him/her aware of your position. Your legislator's [contact information is available here](#); use it to make sure she/he is aware of your "*support for the motion to override the governor's veto of SB 1.*"

How can you deliver this message? The contact information includes phone and fax numbers, and in most cases it also includes email addresses. If you make a phone call, use the district office number today or the Springfield office number if you put off your call until tomorrow morning. (But don't put it off.)

Whether you phone, fax or email, the person who takes your message directly is likely to be a secretary or other member of the legislative staff. Make sure your message clearly identifies your state representative as the recipient and your position (for or against) a motion to override the governor's veto of SB 1.

Think for a moment about this. We are often urged to be "engaged" with civic processes, to be informed, to discuss our policy preferences with others, to vote and, sometimes, to contact our elected officials. Such engagement is always good, but in this case, it may be the *most important engagement opportunity of your life.*

This is more important than the lunar eclipse. Don't miss out on it.

Me, I'm going to be completely unaware of House activity tomorrow. In fact, it will probably be Friday before I am aware of anything in the real world. Tomorrow morning I'll be undergoing another routine medical procedure and, thanks to some medications to make me oblivious, I'll be lost in the fog for a day or two.

So you won't hear from me until next week. But I would be interested in reading over the weekend your reactions to the House members' collective decision on the SB 1 override motion. Just use the contact link below and let it out. If you've stayed with this civics lecture to this point, thanks for your patient attention. - Jim

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