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Fwd: Democracy or bureaucracy? Committee must choose

1 message

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To: nblodgett@panaschools.com

Tue, Feb 26, 2019 at 10:26 AM

March board meeting

Sent from my iPhone

Begin forwarded message:

From: State School News Service <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>
Date: February 26, 2019 at 8:13:55 AM CST
To: jbauer@panaschools.com
Subject: Democracy or bureaucracy? Committee must choose
Reply-To: j.m.broadway74@gmail.com

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Volume 25, Number 13, February 26, 2019

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Democracy? Bureaucracy? Panel must choose

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

[NOTE: The [ISNS bill-tracking page](#) is up to date. It now includes, at the top, a link to HB 3774, one of 75 appropriations [bills filed Friday](#). The bill appears to appropriate Gov. JB [Pritzker's recommended dollar amounts](#) for lines in the FY 2020 budget of the Illinois State Board of Education. It is surely the **budget bill to watch.**]

Three House committees that public education advocates care about have scheduled hearings this week. The one related to the FY 2020 budget [has four bills posted](#) for a hearing at 2 p.m. today - but the bill referred to in the above note is not one of them. No definitive budget action should be expected until late May.

The House PK-12 committee on [school curriculum and policies](#) has over 30 bills posted for a hearing scheduled to convene at 9:30 a.m. Wednesday. It's a poorly named panel. They should just call it the Mandates Committee. Many of the ideas are excellent, but they also cost money that the state's not paying.

The main event of the week will be the PK-12 committee whose policy [agenda includes charter schools](#). It is scheduled to convene at 2 p.m. Wednesday in Capitol Room 115 (you [may monitor it here](#)) and it has 25 bills posted, far too many for the committee members to discuss in one day, even in a very long day.

There are bills posted for Wednesday that deal with students' health and safety, with teacher credentialing and license renewal and evaluations and salary, with class size goals and school closure regulation, with abolishing the Illinois High School Association, with pension contributions and with other issues.

But the most important question for the committee to answer Wednesday will be this one: Should *democracy*, embodied in an elected public school board, govern a school district's most fundamental actions - or should *bureaucracy*, in the form of a state commission of anonymous appointees, hold superior authority?

For the legislators considering [charter school-related bills posted](#) for the committee's consideration, the question is just as simple as that. *Democracy or bureaucracy, take your pick.* There are bills to reduce the [State Charter School Commission's](#) authority over local districts, to regulate it or to limit charter authorizations.

The most dramatic - and final - proposal on this subject is [HB 2100](#), sponsored by [Rep. Emanuel Chris Welch](#) (D-Chicago), which would simply abolish the SCSC, allow elected school boards to do what they were elected to do, and return all other SCSC duties to the State Board of Education (also appointed, but less anonymous).

At this writing, more than 100 proponents of HB 2100 had filed [witness slips](#) to support the committee's adoption of it, while fewer than 10 had filed slips in opposition. But that can change. The Illinois Network for Charter Schools can mobilize charter advocates by the hundreds. ([You can create a witness slip](#), if you wish.)

Restoring to 6% the limit on late-career pay increases districts can give TRS members, without paying for the pay raises' effects of increasing the state-paid pension system funding in the future, is the subject of several bills this year. [HB 350](#), filed by [Rep. Kathleen Willis](#) (D-Northlake), is already on second reading in the House.

HB 350 is one of sixteen [Pension Code bills ISNS is tracking](#) this year. The measure responds to a tightening of pension law during the administration of former Gov. Bruce Rauner. The 6% limit was enacted years ago, in response to a trend in which late-career pay hikes as high as 20% per year were common.

At that time, legislative leaders asserted that districts were "gaming" the pension system by underpaying administrators for years and then dramatically raising their pay during the years included in the pension benefit calculations, effectively shifting the burden for the pay hikes to statewide taxpayers in the future.

There are indications that Gov. JB Pritzker would sign HB 350 or a similar bill, if one reaches his desk, as is likely. It is a bill supported by both the teachers unions and the education management groups. More than 450 proponents of the bill submitted [witness slips in support of it](#), compared with just 34 opponents.

Why would the House clog up the calendar with committee hearings this week, while the Senate schedules no hearings at all? The reason, of course, is that the Senate is taking the week off. Today is election day in Chicago and some other municipalities. Maybe so some senators want to help their friends get elected.

The challenge is exceptional in Chicago, where there are [14 candidates running for mayor](#), the most in city history. You know of some of them. Illinois Comptroller [Susana Mendoza](#) is my favorite. Former CPS CEO [Paul Vallas](#) is an old friend. As you know, I also think fondly of state Rep. [La Shawn Ford](#).

But these three surely will be also-rans.

Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation; former White House Chief of Staff; son of the late Mayor Richard J. Daley; brother of former Mayor Richard M. Daley - that's right, [Bill Daley](#) - is the heaviest hitter in the contest. (My heart's with Susana but my money is on Bill.) Cook County Board President [Toni Preckwinkle](#) has a shot.

The last candidate I'll mention is [Gery Chico](#), former CPS board president. He came all the way to Springfield and sought my primary endorsement for a U.S. Senate seat in

2004. I interviewed him, then I endorsed a young unknown candidate named Barack Obama. This year, [Chico has Eddie Burke's endorsement](#). Ouch!

Why is this subject worth so much space in ISNS? Whoever is mayor of Chicago will have a lot of influence over the legislative delegation from the Windy City, and that delegation strongly influences high-impact school policy outcomes. The [great WBEZ](#) recently focused on the candidates' education views.

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