



Jim Broadway

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Illinois School News Service

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Volume 24, Number 30, May 21, 2018

Bill-passing process picks up steam

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Just a brief note today as the Senate ([convening at 2:30](#)) and the House ([gathering at 4:00](#)) begin the homestretch of the current legislative session, the period when - according to the schedule - legislators will stay on the job, non-stop, racing to finish their tasks before the session deadline at midnight May 31.

While you wait for the chambers' webcast sessions to begin, so you can monitor them at the times hyperlinked above, you can review what they did last week to the School Code-amending bills that have remained active so late in the process. In fact, a half dozen have crossed the finish line ([highlighted in green on this page](#)).

Bills that have "passed both houses" this early (yes, it's still early in this regard) are usually of the non-controversial variety. This seems true of the bills listed on the ISNS bill status page linked above - even though one of them ([HB 4870](#)) deals with administering to students a substance still illegal under federal law.

That bill, describing parents' authority to administer cannabis to their children for whom the substance has been prescribed by a physician per Illinois law, had passed the House with [only one dissenting vote](#). When it came to a vote on the Senate floor last week, only [two senators cast their votes against it](#).

Bills that were obviously dead by the start of the week have been stricken from the ISNS [active School Code bill list](#). There surely are many others that have been marked for demise by their death panels, but I decided to leave bills on the list until there is no doubt about their viability. Other bills that passed are:

[HB 4346](#), which began life as a curriculum mandate for African American studies in high schools and universities, but was amended to apply only to state institutions of higher education.

[HB 4369](#), a bill to require the State Board of Education to develop a handbook on the subject of dyslexia and to maintain the document on its web site and update it at least every four years.

[HB 4514](#), a bill clarifying who may use the title of "school counselor."

[HB 4795](#), a very complex bill addressing mostly the state statutes relating to drug use and dependency, with only one referent to the School Code (relating to [self-administration of medicines](#)), passed both chambers unanimously.

[HB 4908](#), which adds a ninth grade dental examination to current law requiring students have have their teeth examined only in kindergarten, second grade and sixth grade.

[HB 5196](#), which would reduce the fee for a paraprofessional educator endorsement to \$25 (it is currently \$100).

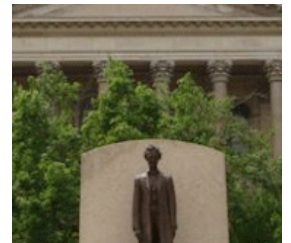
Will the legislature really be in session on the weekend? The schedules posted by the House and Senate both suggest that is the case. But schedules posted by the General Assembly don't have much credibility. I think it is more likely that the chamber leaders will pick up the pace until Friday, then call for a break.

Major questions I hear from school leaders always include: Will there be a budget. As contentious as budget-shaping can become, there's been [no change in the environment](#) of that process since the last time I checked on it. Therefore, my first prediction continues to be my current one: A budget will pass by May 31.

And, again, this is an election year and the legislative leaders will want to project a robust level of support for public schools. Therefore, the \$350 million or so in "increased" school funding will be in the budget (even though that will not be enough to stay on track to the goal of "adequach" for all schools by 2027).

Gov. Bruce Rauner is at a critical moment with regard to his chances of being reelected, of defeating Democrat challenger JB Pritzker in November. If the House and Senate pass a budget next week and he vetoes it, there will be another budget gap, and he'll be blamed. Rauner needs to look strong - but sign whatever passes.

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