



Jessica Miller <jmiller@panaschools.com>

Capitol Watch: Legislative Session is Underway!

1 message

IASA <iasa@iasaedu.org>
Reply-To: ewarnecke@iasaedu.org
To: jmiller@panaschools.com

Fri, Jan 30, 2026 at 12:30 PM



Session is Officially Underway: What to Expect this Spring

Hello and Happy Friday!

The Illinois General Assembly is officially back in action, and while the first weeks in both chambers were largely procedural, it marks the start of what will likely be a fast-moving and high-impact spring for public education. As we head into the heart of the state's legislative season, I wanted to take a moment to share what you can expect from the association in terms of communication, advocacy opportunities, and priorities over the coming months.

What to Expect from Us Each Week

You can expect a weekly legislative update each Friday that either chamber is in session from now until the end of May. Each update will include a straightforward "lowdown" on what happened in Springfield; what moved, what didn't, and what we're watching. As legislation begins moving through the process, we'll flag proposals that matter most to school leaders, especially those that affect funding, operations, mandates, accountability, and governance. The full schedules for each chamber can be found here: [House](#) and [Senate](#).

Calls to Action: When We Need Your Voice Quickly

In addition to the Friday newsletter, you may also receive Calls to Action during the week when a bill is moving quickly and we need member engagement in real time. These may include requests to:

- **File witness slips** for committee hearings
- **Contact your legislators** (phone/email) with a quick message
- **Share local impact stories** that help reinforce our position

These rapid-response moments are often when member advocacy makes the biggest difference, and we'll always provide clear instructions and talking points to make it as easy as possible.

Association Priority Spotlight: Underfunded Mandated Categorical Payments

One of our top legislative priorities this session is ensuring lawmakers fully understand the growing burden districts face from underfunded mandated categorical payments. This issue directly affects district budgets, limits flexibility, and forces local communities to absorb costs the state requires but does not adequately support. We are working to keep this issue front-and-center with legislators throughout the spring, and your local voice is essential to making it “real” for decision-makers.

Please take a few minutes to:

- ✓ Review the advocacy resources [here](#)
- ✓ Reach out to your legislators to explain how underfunded categorical mandates are impacting your district
- ✓ Share specific examples: cost increases, staffing tradeoffs, program impacts, and what it means for students

Even a short email or quick conversation can be incredibly powerful, especially when it comes from district leaders who are living the reality behind the numbers.

Of note, the Illinois State Board of Education approved its FY27 budget recommendation at the January 14th board meeting. The highlights include an increase of \$350 million for Evidence-Based Funding and the Property Tax Relief Grant, as well as a \$151 million increase for Mandated Categorical Programs. This MCAT increase is estimated to maintain proration for transportation lines and private facility reimbursements at FY26 levels. ISBE estimates a needed increase of \$558 million in order to return proration to 100% for private facility reimbursement and mid-80% for transportation line items. Now our eyes and ears turn to the next phase of the budget process - Governor Pritzker’s FY27 State of the State / Budget Address, which is set for noon on February 18th.

Looking Ahead

Friday, February 6th is the bill filing deadline for the Spring 2026 session, and we expect several hundred bills to be filed between now and then as legislators scramble to get their proposals over the first legislative hurdle (we have seen almost 8,000 bills filed for the 104th so far!). With a primary election looming in March, it remains to be seen how busy the February session may be. If legislators take the month to focus on their local races and legislative districts, we could be in for a jam-packed April and May.

As always, thank you for your leadership, your partnership, and your advocacy. We’re proud to represent you at the Capitol, and we look forward to keeping you informed and engaged every step of the way this session!

Sincerely,

Emily Warnecke

Chief of Staff



[IASA](#) | [2648 Beechler Court](#) | [Springfield, IL 62703-7305 US](#)

[Unsubscribe](#) | [Constant Contact Data Notice](#)



Try email marketing for free today!