



Jim Broadway

*Jim Broadway's*

## Illinois School News Service

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### Senate, House begin sprint to adjournment

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Both chambers of the Illinois General Assembly are scheduled to show up Tuesday ready to toil through the month of May toward adjournment on or before (probably before) May 31. The Senate was in session last week, so it has a head start. House bills *must be acted on in Senate committees by Friday* - or they die.

Then the Senate will have two weeks until the deadline - for passing House bills on third reading. The House, which deals generally with fewer Senate bills, will take until Friday of next week to move Senate bills out of its committees. Deadlines for third-reading (passage) votes in both chambers are similarly Friday, May 25.

What's the status of the bill you care the most about? If it amends the School Code, it's either [on this web page](#) that I have prepared - or it's dead and is no longer to be feared (or hoped for, as the case may be). The bills still alive are categorized, then put in numerical order and then described as to their *current* policy effects.

From a bill's number, you can even link to lists of people who've filed witness slips for - or against - each bill. For example, the curriculum bill to bolster physical education ([HB 2572](#)) had witness slips filed by 30 folks who identified themselves as "opponents" of the bill - but well over [1,000 who went on record in support](#) of it.

I'm hoping this page will be a useful tool for you to track your bills in the final weeks of the session. As it says, use the comment link to tell me if I've incorrectly described a bill (it could happen) - or to tell me of a bill number that is not on the page but, because of its education implications, you think it should be.

**Meanwhile, keep your seatbelts** buckled for the potentially bumpy ride ahead. Although there are signs that House Speaker Michael Madigan will try to keep the theatrics to a minimum, the last month of a session is always an adventure. A few bills are controversial, and the budget-shaping process is politically perilous.

On the [School Code bill-tracking page](#) that I posted, you can see 67 bills - 40 from the House, 27 from the Senate - that have survived chamber-of-origin committee and floor deadlines. All are now in the second chamber, positioned to go through the process again, the committee hearings and floor votes.

That's about one-fourth of the School Code bills that were filed for this year's spring session. Ten of those 67 bills deal with educator credentials. Mostly, that's in response to the teacher shortage. (I may have to renew my sub certificate.) Eight bills relate to student safety. (The valid ones are unrelated to school shootings.)

Another eight bills focus on student health. They all address real issues, but some are contentious for political reasons as well. Example: 25 advocates supported a bill that would require information on the CDC's latest recommendations about vaccinations be made available to parents; [575 opposed informing parents](#).

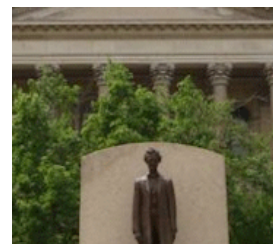
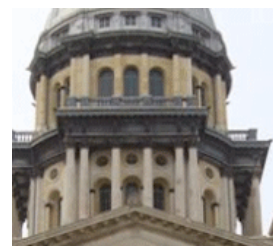
**The Senate Education Committee is to convene** at 2 p.m. Tuesday with an agenda that has [grown to twenty](#) House bills and a couple of Senate resolutions. [HB 4208](#), a bill to encourage schools to employ more counselors, was hotly opposed in the House by those who saw it as an attack on having police officers in schools. Amendments were adopted to quell the opposition, watering down the bill, and it [barely passed the House 64-25](#).

Bills to deal rationally with concussion protocols have sparked intense controversy in the past. [HB 4226](#) demonstrated by passing the House unanimously that the policymakers seem finally to understand that we get only one brain, that injuries to it may have symptoms delayed for years, but they change who we are just the same.

Unfortunately, House members didn't even get to vote on [HB 4341](#), a bill to prevent the most vulnerable football players (those age 12 and under) from getting life-changing head injuries in the first place. The [Friday night lights mentality](#) still rules, without regard to [potential brain damage to children](#).

Bills of all categories listed on the ISNS bill-tracking page are posted for the Senate Education Committee hearing this week. It will be difficult - make that impossible - for all of them to be considered. And since the deadline for committee action is Friday, that means a lot of bills - some even good ones - will die.

But advocates *need not give up* on a bill they like. If a School Code-amending bill dies of neglect in committee, it can still become law. For example, its language may be amended onto a germane (in this case, School Code-amending) bill that is still alive and well in the policy process. Stay alert and don't stop working.



**What are some of the school-related ideas** that died in the House without being given even a floor vote? Well, in addition to the bill to keep 12-year-old brains intact, a quick review reveals: [HB 5074](#), a bill for rational mental health services to schoolchildren; [HB 5096](#), a media literacy proposal (especially important in this era of "fake news"); [HB 5145](#), a bill to limit out-of-school suspensions of *kindergarteners*; [HB 5349](#), requiring *just a study* of tuition tax credit effects.

Speaking of taxes, the constitutional amendment proposal for graduated tax rates ([SJRCA 1](#)) will have lingered without even a committee hearing for the full 100th General Assembly's biennium. It was postponed by Senate Executive Committee chairman Don Harmon (*the SFICA 1 sponsor*) five times last year. (Without graduated income tax rates, evidence-based school funding for equity is a myth - and [crippling state debt is permanent](#).)

Anticipating that graduated tax rates are politically blocked, and that education funding will take a hit every time the state experiences a recession, [Rep. Sue Scherer](#) (D-Decatur) proposed in January of 2017 [HJRCA 12](#) which, if ratified, would require three-fifths majority votes in both the House and the Senate to appropriate fewer dollars for public education in any year, as compared with the previous year's appropriations. Never got a hearing.

The [Illinois Constitution](#) sets as a "fundamental goal" the "educational development of all persons to the limits of their capacities." [Rep. Christian Mitchell](#) (D-Chicago) filed [HJRCA 40](#) in February, proposing that the voters be given a chance to change the word "goal" to the word "right." Never even got assigned to a committee.

**Why are such basic governance proposals not even debated?** It is the fundamental conundrum of democracy. It is as old as the experiment of government "by the people," and we see it develop at the Capitol in Springfield every year about this time. It's a consequence, I think, of House Speaker [Michael Madigan's](#) expertise.

Madigan was a delegate to the convention that wrote the Constitution of 1970. He was first elected the House and the constitution was ratified by the voters in November of 1970. In his first term of office, he watched Dan Walker defeat the heavily favored Paul Simon in the 1972 Democratic primary for governor.

Walker used a casual comment Simon had made, that he preferred a graduated tax rate to the flat rate just enacted, to win that election. "Simon would triple your taxes," Walker warned, knowing all the while that that would take amending the constitution, and *governors cannot* put constitutional amendments on the ballot.

Despite what you may have heard, Madigan has been tax proposal-averse ever since. He also knows that getting too far ahead of the voters (which is often called "leading") is political suicide. His obvious plan has been to maintain a majority in the House - and enacting effective policy is no higher than second priority.

**In a recent newsletter, I mused about the timing** of the House vacation last week. I thought it might have something to do with the Speaker's desire not to have any constitutional amendment proposals on this year's ballot - and to not have any demonstrations at the Capitol calling for such amendments.

And of course, that break for the House made it certain that there will be no constitutional amendment proposals of any kind on the November ballot this year, because the [deadline for legislative action](#) to put them there had passed before the House could resume its work, "the people's business," this week.

So "the people" will be left out of the process, in our "democracy," by which decisions on how they are governed will be made. Does this line of commentary mean that I am about to launch into my "Death of Democracy" rant that my friend Bill Phillips so enjoys seeing me deliver to his students at UIS?

No. Not this week. But before the end of the spring session - during the down time when the bills that are going to be allowed a vote have been decided and the finer points of a budget for FY 2019 are still being debated - I'll tell you how government in Illinois has changed since 1981. But you must promise not to cry.

**Links to newsletters posted so far this year** are available [at this web page link](#). Please remember that *current* ISNS archives are for our subscribers only; *do not share this link*. Also, all 2017 issues can be found in the [web page at this link](#). You *may share the 2017 archives web page link* with anyone who wants to see it.

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