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## Fwd: Advance Illinois says add another \$100 million

1 message

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Mon, Oct 22, 2018 at 7:57 AM

November Regular Board Meeting

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From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>  
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## Advance Illinois says add another \$100 million

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Most, but not all, of Illinois legislators are bragging that they've poured \$350 million into the evidence-based education funding mechanism in each of the last two years. It's not quite true. For the current fiscal year, they diverted \$50 million into a program of property tax relief. Still, it's better than most past years.

[Advance Illinois](#), the respected advocacy group that celebrates its 10th year of activism for education in December, thinks the state is on the right path. The new funding has cut the list of school districts *with less than 60% of what they need* to "adequately" educate their kids from 183 districts all the way down to 14.

That was possible because the new funding mechanism steered nearly 80% of the new dollars to schools considered "majority low-income, low-wealth districts." Pretty good, but in FY 2020 "we must do better," the organization testified at last week's State Board of Education budget hearing in Springfield.

The legislature's plan of adding \$350 million per year won't reach the goal of merely *adequate* funding being achieved in all districts by 2027, as ISNS has reported for two years. But even doing just half of that is undermined by diverting funds for property tax relief. So Advance Illinois recommends a \$450 million bump for FY 2020.

**FY 2020, now being planned for, begins July 1.** The State [Board is conducting more hearings](#) - the next one is slated for Wednesday, 4 to 6 p.m., Dr. Nick Osborne Primary

Center, [401 North 30th Street, Mt. Vernon](#) - in preparation of the ISBE budget recommendation to Gov. Bruce Rauner and the General Assembly.

For this year, as he has in the past, [Rauner generally ignored](#) ISBE's recommendation. Everyone pretty much ignored the proposal for a \$7 billion increase - enough to meet the 2027 goal immediately - but Rauner even tried to zero out modestly funded, proven programs. Legislators restored most of Rauner's proposed cuts.

Of course, Rauner is unlikely to play a role in the FY 2020 budget. Unless he's reelected November 6 (most unlikely), he'll be a *former* governor as of January 7. His Democratic challenger, Chicago billionaire J. B. Pritzker, seems almost sure to be delivering a comprehensive budget proposal in February or March.

From there, the normal process is one of negotiation involving the four legislative caucuses and the governor. Will the \$450 million bump for schools be considered? It might be. Advance Illinois and others are supporting it as an agenda item. Without such efforts, of course, it would just not happen at all.

**The answer to this question may evoke frustration:** Why would an education association become a top contributor to the campaign of a senator who he voted repeatedly against changing the way the state funds schools in ways that benefit the schools clustered in his own senate district the most? Makes no sense?

In fact it does make sense, depending on your assumptions. If, as the contributing association, you assume the senator will be reelected whether you contribute to him or not, and if you assume your contribution will mitigate any attitudes he holds *against public education*, then you'd be smart to "invest" the money in him.

As a former corporate officer of an organization that had to make such calculations, I'd guess the Illinois PAC for Education (IEA) had a similar rationale for showering [Sen. Dale Fowler](#) (R-Harrisburg) with [\\$55,400 on August 21](#). If he's going to be there anyway, why not grease the hinges on his office door just a bit?

A better question might be, how could Fowler have voted against the financial well-being of school districts he represents, not just once but repeatedly? He voted against them last year on [May 17](#), on [May 31](#), on [August 13](#) (all votes on SB1), and against SB 1947 - which even his caucus leader supported- on [August 29](#).

Of the 183 districts which, as calculated by the "evidence-based" methodology, had less than 60% of the resources they needed to just "adequately" educate their children, many are in the 59th Senate District, Fowler's southern Illinois base. Such a betrayal of your constituents seems unforgivable.

**Sometimes an alternative must prove its viability.** It is not as if the voters of the 59th District have no choice. Fowler is not unopposed this year, as he was in his last election. But the Democratic primary had no candidates, so time was lost to build a strong campaign. [Dr. Steve Webb was later slated](#) to oppose Fowler.

Webb would seem to be the [education community's dream candidate](#). He is superintendent of the Goreville CUSD 1 and is a past president of the Illinois Association of School Administrators and of the Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools. He is a credentialed police officer and he specializes in education law and policy as an adjunct faculty member at Southern Illinois University, Eastern Illinois University and McKendree University. He's also a farmer.

Great candidate, but he's at a disadvantage. Coming in late as a slated candidate hurts him. Also, financial assets are not in his favor. His Board of Elections files suggest that his total receipts just about equal the IEA's contribution to Fowler. At the end of September [he had about \\$1,600](#) on hand. [Fowler had nearly \\$133,000](#).

I'm not saying Webb can't win. Upsets happen. If all the parents with children in schools that gained state funding that Fowler voted against were to support Webb,

he might pull off an earthquake of an upset. But if the normal dynamics of political campaigns prevail, Fowler gets another term as a senator.

In that event, Webb's supporters can look at two positive developments. First, they've identified a candidate who could, given an even chance, represent them in the Illinois Senate of the future. And, two, Illinois now uses every new education dollar to help the least affluent schools - like those Fowler voted against.

**Never trust a man with thin lips.** I first heard that bit of prejudice years ago from a friend and former boss. I was a journalist but he was not. I had since thought this blind spot was uniquely his, [but apparently not](#). I want to write a bit about prejudices. I've had plenty of them in my time. So have you.

Sometimes, forced into a corner, we resort to the "I-just-believe-it" defense of our views. George W. Bush did that a lot. Keeps you from having to say *why* you believe something. My theory (I just believe it.) is that the prefrontal cortex makes up a story to explain the irrational conclusion of an amygdala gone wild.

Which returns me to Bush. His eyes are [too beady, too close](#) together, my amygdala observed. That's why, my prefrontal cortex explained, he jumped into an unnecessary war. His eyes prevented him from having much depth perception. Bush could not see deeply enough, so he sent young people into battle.

The eyes of U.S. Rep. Rodney Davis (my congressman) remind me of Bush's. He cannot see why I would not be thrilled that he helped give wealthy people \$1.5 trillion for my children to repay. Too little depth perception. I believe Betsy Londrigan, his election opponent, has the opposite eyes? [You be the judge](#).

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