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Rauner signs budget with self-serving flair

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

He was so proud of the FY 2019 budget that he signed Monday, you'd almost believe that Gov. Bruce Rauner drafted it one day at his kitchen table. You'd almost believe it resembles the proposal he delivered to the legislature in February. You'd almost think the Civic Federation supported - [instead of having opposed](#) - that proposal.

What the hey? That he signed [HB 109](#) is important. It met his test - full-year funding and purportedly balanced, with no tax increase. (These are election-year criteria the Democrat majorities would adopt in any case.) Importantly, it sends another [huge funding increase](#) to school districts, largely to those that need it most.

So the state has boosted funding through its new "evidence-based" formula - [which Rauner claimed](#) his "administration introduced in 2015" (Does anyone else remember it that way?) - by more than \$700 million/year, compared with FY 2017, and has cranked up early childhood education funding by \$100 million/year.

Truly, the new system represents a huge *turnaround* (to use Rauner's favorite term) from the years when wealthy school districts with failure-proof demographics were rewarded for results that merely should have been expected, while poorer districts with the most challenging students were punished for predictable results.

Appropriately positive reactions have been expressed: "The Governor's signing of the FY19 state budget ... provides much-needed certainty for schools. For the second consecutive year we have a robust investment in education via the new, more equitable funding formula," said the [Funding IL's Future](#) coalition.

"After years of pro-ration and underfunding by the state, we are on a path to a brighter future for our students. We commend the Governor and the General Assembly for their work on a state budget compromise. Today is a moment to dream of the endless possibilities for kids in Illinois."

The massive Coalition worked tirelessly for a couple of years, [especially last year](#), in pushing for the evidence-based funding model. Eventually, it was enacted in [SB 1947](#) last summer, in a compromise that conceded private school tuition tax credits, a Rauner/Republican demand. Rauner happily signed it into law.

But the new school funding model would have been worthless, this year and in the fiscal year that starts July 1, if not for revenue generated by last [year's tax increase](#) and the [FY 2018 state budget](#) - and both were enacted with bipartisan votes to *override vetoes by Rauner*. It's pretty nervy of him to take any credit it all.

Rauner soon will have many other bills to consider before his work as governor is done. During May, and mostly in the last few days of the month, a total of 63 [bills that would amend the School Code](#) finished their journey through the House and Senate. None have reached Rauner yet, but they will be on his desk soon.

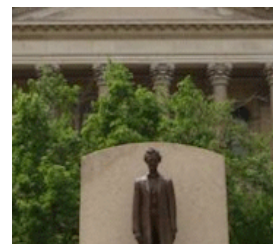
Once a bill has passed both chambers, the Illinois Constitution gives the legislature 30 calendar days to certify that it passed in a constitutional manner and deliver it to the governor. The governor has 60 days to take action. He can sign the bill into law, veto it or return it to the legislature with "recommendations for change."

If he vetoes a bill, the legislature can make it law only by overriding the veto by getting three-fifths majority votes in both chambers on a motion to that effect. Similarly, the legislature needs three-fifth majorities to make a bill become law notwithstanding the governor's recommendations for change. But such recommendations can be accepted by simple majority votes in both chambers. Any other action - or none at all - results in the bill's demise.

You'll get to see the veto process work when Rauner receives [HB 5175](#) for his consideration. That bill was amended in the last week of the session to *emasculate the Illinois Charter School Commission*, to explicitly repeal its power to overturn a local school board's decision to reject a charter school proposal.

Rauner will veto the bill. He loves charter schools, wishes all schools were charter schools. A motion to override his veto will be filed in the House. (Action on a vetoed bill always starts in the chamber of origin.) But that motion will fall short of the required three-fifths majority (71 votes), so the bill will simply die there.

But this will be something of a warm-up exercise for local control of schools. In January, a new gubernatorial term begins. The smart money says the governor who is then sworn in will be of a mind to sign into law a bill repealing the authority of the Charter School Commission to overturn local school boards' actions.



Rauner will sign most of the 63 pending School Code bills into law. Much was accomplished, most of it in a bipartisan manner, relating to students' health and safety, to educator credentials and to curriculum particulars. Some bills were highly controversial, but most were agreed to by both parties.

After he receives the bills, Rauner will be able to draw attention to his leadership over the summer, vetoing the bills he does not like and taking credit for all the rest. If he actually is to have a political future (but he won't), he must avoid any mistakes between now and November, must not get caught in any more lies.

Rauner is starting his reelection campaign at a disadvantage. The Democratic candidate is Chicago businessman J.B. Pritzker, who is ([according to recent polling](#)) pretty far ahead of Rauner in acceptance by likely voters. True, Rauner is a man of unimaginable wealth - but Pritzker has three or four times as much money.

Pritzker's party seems enthusiastically supportive of him, in spite of his truly stupid conversation with former Gov. Rod Blagojevich, who is currently in prison but [may well receive a presidential pardon](#). Rauner's party is less enthusiastic about him; the conservative GOP base, in fact, seems to dislike him intensely.

Where are they on the issues? We'll examine that under a microscope in the weeks and months to come. But one hint you can rely on is that Pritzker is strongly pro-public education, emphasis on the *public*. He'd support a moratorium on charter school formation. He'd return local control of schools.

Whereas Rauner has characterized the leadership of statewide teachers' organizations as union "bosses," Pritzker counts those educators among his closest friends and advisors. Is Pritzker "in their pockets"? You know, that's a pretty crude and presumptuous political characterization. But, yeah, I think he is.

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