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## Fwd: Legislators sprint toward Easter vacation

1 message

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April board meeting agenda

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From: **State School News Service** <j.m.broadway74@gmail.com>  
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## Legislators sprint toward Easter vacation

By Jim Broadway, Publisher, Illinois School News Service

Our 177 state legislators are working hard. Hey, I'm serious. This is not some April Fool's Day gag. Counting today, there are just ten weekdays between now and the start of their much-deserved two-week Easter break. They'll be at the Capitol, sleeves rolled up, *for seven of those days*. Seven! How will they manage?

April 12, Friday of next week, is the deadline for bills originating in either chamber to be passed to the "second chamber." To miss that deadline could be (should be) fatal. From the 12th to April 30, both chambers will be idle. (Me too, perhaps.) Then comes the heavy lifting, the FY 2020 budget and other big deals.

The scheduled day of adjournment is always May 31. In recent years it has been questioned: Will they adjourn on time? This year, the question already has an answer - and it is "yes." All it takes is agreement of Gov. JB Pritzker, House Speaker Michael Madigan and Senate President John Cullerton - three old friends.

Anyway, getting back to the present moment, viable bills are either on 2nd reading (amendment is possible), 3rd reading (positioned for a passing - or failing - vote), or they've passed to the second chamber and can be ignored until April 30. The process now is moving them from 2nd to 3rd, then voting them - up or down.

**The deadlines for committee action trimmed** the workload a bit. The number of School Code (and related) bills we track has been cut in half, from the original 265 down to about 130. The [ISNS bill-tracking page](#) will be helpful until about noon on Tuesday. (It gets outdated quickly.) Bill statuses are color-coded.

Bills on 3rd reading, for example, are coded in green. They are ready to "go," ready for a vote. But don't be confused if a bill is returned from 3rd to 2nd reading; that means it will be amended and, typically, quickly returned to 3rd for its "final action" vote. If it passes, it crosses the Rotunda to the second chamber.

Bills that are still on 2nd reading when the House session convenes Tuesday are coded in yellow. They're waiting for an amendment to be adopted before they are moved to 3rd and get a vote. You'll note that [HB 2100](#), the bill to abolish the State School Charter Commission, is still on 2nd, but I believe this bill will pass.

Interestingly, [SB 1226](#), which also would abolish the commission is on 2nd reading in the Senate. Why would they have two bills that do the same thing? Sometimes it's just like insurance against the unexpected. But sometimes it's a tactic, one that lets everyone "vote for" a concept - but it still doesn't pass both chambers.

**The bills calling for "school district efficiency"** (read "consolidation") are both still viable. [SB 1828](#) is still in the Senate, on 2nd reading. It's been there two weeks. Some complicated negotiations are possibly taking place. There's time for an agreement to be reached and an amendment to be adopted, by April 12.

The other consolidation bill (identical to SB 1828), [HB 3053](#), is zipping right along. It passed the House [unanimously](#) on Thursday and is waiting for a sponsor to pick it up in the Senate. But there is no hurry. They both may pass their chamber of origin, but no committees will consider second-chamber bills before April 30.

In current form, either bill creates a 20-member commission to study consolidation and recommend policy that would, among other effects, reduce the number of Illinois school districts by "no less than 25%." That would erase 213 districts from the map. But voters in affected districts *could still reject the plan*.

The only other bill left in the "Big Ideas" section of the bill-tracking page is [SB 2075](#), the bill proposing to lower the age of compulsory school attendance from the current 6 years down to 5 years. It's on 3rd reading so it could get a vote and move to the House any time. Will the House pass it? That may be up to Pritzker.

**A bill that should be in Big Ideas** is [HB 2267](#). It would give Chicago an elected school board - just like everywhere else in Illinois. It passed the House Executive Committee unanimously last Wednesday. That's significant; the House Executive Committee is totally responsive to the wishes of Speaker Michael Madigan.

Currently, you know, the Chicago Public Schools Board is appointed by the mayor. But surveys in the city have indicated strong popular support for an elected board - and both candidates in [Tuesday's mayoral election](#) agree with that position. As a candidate last year, [Pritzker supported electing the CPS board](#).

If this policy is enacted, as now seems likely, it will affect future legislation relating to school district governance in ways that would probably be beneficial to the other 851 or so districts in the state. In subtle ways, it would nudge the CPS board members into the same boat as other members of the [IASB](#).

Other potentially Big Ideas bills, in my view, are [HB 2084](#) (on 2nd reading in the House) and [SB 1941](#) (on 3rd reading in the Senate), each of which would create a "Safe Schools and Healthy Learning Environment" grant program. Schools with high numbers of students suspended or expelled - with high "racial disproportionality" in that regard - would be eligible to seek grants. Funding would be "subject to appropriation" and would arrive, if at all, with significant strings attached.

**Racial strife exploded on the House floor on Friday.** The debate was of [HB 3394](#), requiring publicly held corporations headquartered in Illinois to include at least one woman and one African American on their boards of directors. The bill passed [61-27](#), but only after about an hour or more of very rancorous debate.

Republican rhetoric accused the sponsor, [Rep. Emanuel Chris Welch](#), and Democrats in general, of unwittingly driving businesses out of Illinois. The Republicans apparently

confused a "publicly held" corporation with a "closely held" corporation; the former experiences lower risks but often must comply with more regulation.

As [USLegal.com explains](#), "publicly held corporations have the burden of complying with additional securities laws, and may require additional periodic disclosure, *stricter corporate governance standards*, and additional procedural obligations in connection with major corporate transactions such as mergers, acquisitions or *elections of directors* than a closely held corporation." [Emphasis by ISNS.]

Other states have enacted similar requirements.

A [brief clip at Illinois News Network](#) begins with an emotional rant by [Rep. Tony McCombie](#). At one point (not in the clip), she asked a "what's next" question: Might Welch sponsor a bill requiring "a white, Christian man" on a corporate board? She kept ignoring the moderator's plea that she "speak to the bill."

Later (end of the clip), [Rep. Steven Reick](#) amazingly declared: "I don't care whether you are offended or not by the fact that we are against this bill. The fact remains is that you're not going to get anything in this country in the way of being treated equally if you're gonna take offense at every damn thing that comes up."

Reick is usually quite congenial, but that won't be easy to get beyond.

### Snippets:

**The federal Charter Schools Program** has wasted perhaps more than a billion dollars, the [Network for Public Education\(NPE\)](#) reported in its recent investigative publication entitled: "[Asleep at the Wheel: How the Federal Charter Schools Program Recklessly Takes Taxpayers and Students for a Ride.](#)"

The NPE documented that hundreds of millions of USDE funding went to charter schools that never opened, or opened and quickly closed. The USDE program funded charters that blocked "certain students" from enrolling. The best thing about the NPE report? The word "Illinois" does not occur in it even once.

**Children should not play tackle football.** I've hammered at that point often in recent years. A child's brain - where he lives and who he is - is way too important to risk. Grownups who make their living by encouraging or facilitating such an activity should be ashamed. But some suspect I oppose "team sports." Absolutely untrue.

I've never doubted that team sports guide a child's development - physical, mental, social-emotional - in profoundly beneficial ways. Washington University (St. Louis) researchers reported a [good brain-related example](#). But tackle football? The evidence of harm to children and youths [just keeps mounting up](#).

**The bill to curb teen smoking** is the only House bill so far to reach the governor's desk. [HB 345](#) would raise the legal age for buying tobacco products to 21. Libertarians and border-county legislators were reluctant, but the bill got strong support - a vote of [82-31](#) in the House and [39-16](#) (and 1 wimpish "present") in the Senate.

An identical bill passed last year but Gov. Bruce Rauner, perhaps chasing the border-county vote, vetoed it. Rauner's reelection tactic failed so the bill is now under review by Pritzker, who is expected to sign it. The bill responds to big-tobacco tactics of using social media cleverly [to get young people addicted](#).

Chasing the young is an [historic tobacco industry strategy](#). Young men in the military are a prime target. Smoking soared, for example, in my 1961 US Air Force training squadron. Some say it's hard to quit, but that's false. I quit many times. Most recently - and finally - I quit in 2009 (August 10th, 2:30 p.m.).

**I've received interesting input from readers** on the subjects of district consolidation and graduated tax rates. The points raised are cogent and worth the conversation. Some folks also expressed an interest in my opinions in certain respects. I'll include a discussion of these topics in a Wednesday newsletter.

**Special ISNS features** will be updated regularly: the [bill-tracking web page](#) showing the status of viable bills that could affect public education policy, and a page of links to all [ISNS newsletters so far delivered](#) in 2019. The URL for these pages will be changed occasionally, so only ISNS readers will see them.

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