

August 14, 2008



ALLIANCE LEGISLATIVE REPORT (95-74)

NO MOVEMENT ON “SCHOOL FUNDING”

Though Governor Rod Blagojevich called a special session this week “to consider measures aimed at increasing school funding, improving the school funding structure and eliminating any current inequities”, no such legislation was considered by either the Senate or House of Representatives. The Governor called in legislators Tuesday for the special session on school funding and Wednesday “to consider the new proposed capital infrastructure needs of the State of Illinois”. The legislature was not scheduled to return to Springfield until November.

When lawmakers arrived in the Capitol on Tuesday, there was not a bill or proposal brought forth for discussion regarding school funding. The House met for only a few minutes, providing an opportunity for a few legislators to publicly chastise the Governor for calling them back into session but failing to provide them with any education funding proposal to discuss. The Senate met in special session briefly, but then went into regular session where the members voted against giving themselves a pay raise.

Likewise, on Wednesday no legislation was debated in either chamber regarding a public infrastructure program. However, House Speaker Michael Madigan did state that progress had been made on a new, scaled back proposal to build roads, bridges, and schools. This program reportedly would not include any expansion of gaming but would include the selling or leasing of the State Lottery.

“OPEN ENROLLMENT” BILL INTRODUCED

Senator James Meeks (D-Chicago) has introduced a bill that would allow students to enroll in a public school district in which they do not reside. **SB 3055** requires a school district to allow non-resident pupils of the school district to attend the schools of the district without charging these students tuition as long as these students are residents of the State. Though the bill does state that the school district is not required to provide the necessary transportation for these students, many other concerns remain.

It is unclear if the “receiving” district would receive State aid for these non-resident pupils. How does the funding follow the student? What happens to the State aid of the district that the student has left? How do you control recruiting of students for academic or athletic reasons? What if the “receiving” district already has a problem with overcrowded schools? Students in families not residing in the school district are not paying property taxes to the district. As the majority of school funding in the State is generated from property taxes, this issue must be addressed to provide fairness to the school districts’ taxpayers.

SB 3055 has been referred to the Senate Rules Committee. Earlier this month Senator Meeks endorsed the idea of pulling Chicago Public School students out of school on this fall’s first school day and transporting them to a suburban school district to attend classes.

BILLS SIGNED INTO LAW BY THE GOVERNOR

Governor Rod Blagojevich has signed the following bills into law. For a list of all of the bills approved by the legislature and sent to the Governor this year, please refer to the Alliance’s “Digest of Bills Passed” at: <http://www.iasb.com/govrel/digest08.cfm>

HB 4159 (Bassi) requires each school district to periodically review its procurement procedures and specifications related to the purchase of products and supplies and modify them as necessary to require the school district to seek out products and supplies that contain recycled materials and to ensure that purchased products and supplies are reusable, durable, or made from recycled materials, if economically and practically feasible. Districts must also review its procurement procedures on solid waste reduction regarding the management of solid waste. The bill is now Public Act 95-0741, effective July 18, 2008.

HB 4229 (Sacia) provides that whenever the term "registered mail" is used in the School Code, it shall be deemed to authorize the use of either registered mail or certified mail, return receipt requested. The bill is now Public Act 95-0790, effective August 8, 2008.

HB 4309 (Reis) provides that if a school district closes one or more recognized school buildings due to a condition beyond the control of the district prior to providing any instruction, then the district may claim a full day of attendance for a maximum of 2 school days based on the average of the 3 prior school days of attendance immediately preceding the closure of the school building. The bill is now Public Act 95-0811, effective August 13, 2008.

HB 4456 (Harris) creates the Commission on Children and Youth Act. The governor will appoint, among the members of the commission, at least one representative "from the field of education". The State Superintendent of Schools would also be a part of the commission. It provides that the Commission shall develop a 5-year strategic plan in collaboration with other children and youth experts and service providers as needed. The bill is now Public Act 95-0781, effective August 5, 2008.

HB 4705 (Currie) provides for a distribution of funds by the State Board of Education to achieve a goal of "Preschool for All Children" through June 30, 2010 (instead of June 30, 2008). It changes the date (from July 1 to November 1) that the State Board of Education must report on the results and progress of students enrolled in preschool educational programs. The bill is now Public Act 95-0724, effective June 30, 2008.

HB 5699 (Hamos) allows a teacher receiving a disability, occupational disability, or disability retirement benefit to engage in limited or part-time employment as a teacher for an employer under either the Downstate Teacher Article or the State Universities Article of the Code without loss of benefits under specific circumstances. The bill is now Public Act 95-0816, effective August 13, 2008.

HB 5717 (Coulson) provides that any child who received a health examination within one year prior to entering the fifth grade for the 2007-2008 school year is not required to receive an additional health examination in order to comply with the provisions of Public Act 95-422 (which requires children entering the sixth grade to have a health examination) when he or she attends school for the 2008-2009 school year, unless the child is attending school for the first time. The bill is now Public Act 95-0737, effective July 16, 2008.

**The legislative report is written and edited by the lobbyists of the Illinois Association of School Boards to provide information to the members of the organizations that comprise the Statewide School Management Alliance.*