

RSAI Legislative Update

Jan. 21, 2016

These updates are posted on the RSAI legislative web page at <http://www.rsaia.org/legislative.html>. The following provides analysis of this week's statehouse action as the legislature kicked off the 2016 Legislative Session. Thanks for all you do to advocate for Iowa's children! margaret.buckton@isfis.net

School Funding SSA Amended in House Education Committee: SF 174 and SF 175, initiated in the Senate last session, originally set the increase in the state per pupil cost and categorical funds at 4%. House Education Committee amended the bills to a 2% increase, with Republicans in favor and Democrats opposed to the amendment. RSAI has now registered opposed to the bills with the passage of the amendment. House floor debate is expected early next week. Assuming the Senate refuses the amendment and the House insists, there will likely be a conference committee appointed soon to hammer out an agreement. Messages to House Members, both sides of the aisle, now through Monday, regarding the need for adequate and timely funding, are encouraged. Key talking points:

- Thanks for getting the school funding discussion started early in Session. Keep at it ☺
- Five of the last six years have included per pupil increases below the cost of doing the business of schools. A 2% increase would extend that track record to 6 out of 7.
- Districts with declining enrollment are even worse off, having to make more program and staff reductions to live within tighter constraints.
- In the last five years, state net revenue growth has averaged 4.1% while the cost per pupil increase has averaged 2.0%. Add on the current year 1.25% increase in per pupil cost and 3.3% REC estimate and that spread continues: six year average SSA is 1.87% and state net revenue growth is 3.9%. Schools haven't experienced the economic recovery that the state has enjoyed.
- To put students and opportunities first, we need adequate, predictable and timely funding. The downward spiral of staff and program reductions needs to stop.

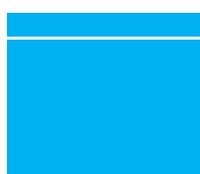
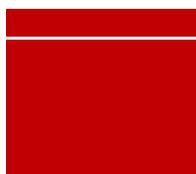
At-risk and DropOut Prevention Applications: Thank legislators are you are talking to them for this additional flexibility approved last session! Please note: all districts must fill out the application, even if you aren't accessing dropout prevention spending authority. Just a reminder that board minutes showing board approval of request for additional modified spending authority for dropout prevention is due March 9 to DE.

Bills Pending: Individual legislators have until tomorrow (Jan. 22) to request bill drafts. We know of several bills being drafted to move RSAI priorities forward, particularly in the areas of transportation equity and district cost per pupil equity. We will share those bill numbers and descriptions with you as they become available.

Subcommittee Action:

HF 2008 Home Rule Light: This bill would grant flexibility to school districts. The bill requires the school board to operate, control and supervise all public schools located within its boundaries and grants the exercise of any broad and implied power, not inconsistent with the laws of the general assembly, related to the operation, control and supervision of those public schools. The bill specifically states that this flexibility and authority does not apply to taxing authority unless expressly authorized by Iowa law. The bill further states that Iowa Code Chapters 274, 257, 257B, and 275 through 301, and other statutes relating to the board of directors of school district and to school districts shall be liberally construed to effectuate the purposes of subsection 1. RSAI is registered in favor of the bill. The subcommittee approved the bill. The DE and ISEA both testified in opposition to the idea, expressing concerns of 1) further inequities/loss of accountability/necessitate rewrite of the entire code, and 2) more power in the hands of management/need to revisit all case law respectively.

HF 2028 Athletic Trainers: This bill would require school districts to contract with one athletic trainer and specifies that because schools receive state foundation aid, this requirement is not an unfunded mandate.



RSAI is registered in opposition to this bill, both because it's an unfunded mandate and because we are concerned about access to certified athletic trainers in rural areas.

SF 2010 ELL Weighting: The bill, by Sen. Petersen, increases ELL weighting from .22 to .30 and from 5 to 7 years of potential services for students who need them. (It's important to note that some students, especially younger elementary, pick up language more quickly than others. This bill doesn't mean that every child will need/receive 7 years of ELL support.) An amendment front loaded the funding, changing the first and second year to 0.39 weighting and leaving the remaining years at 0.22. The subcommittee approved the bill moving forward to full committee as amended.

Because you asked: SF 2017 SAVE Appropriation: This bill makes a standing appropriation to the secure an advanced vision for education (SAVE) fund, requiring an additional \$5 million appropriation annually beginning July 1, 2016 through 2029. We asked Sen. Chelgren, the author, what was up with this idea. He's on the rules review committee. When the Department of Revenue made definition changes expanding business sales tax exemptions, there was an estimate of \$5-7 million loss of revenue annually to the SAVE fund. His bill would replace that \$5 million annually until the sunset in 2029.

Thank you for all of your advocacy and support this Legislative Session! We will report further action when it happens, including Governor's approval and vetoes during the next 95 days (and longer if recent history repeats itself). In the meantime, keep advocating for the students in your schools!

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