

RSAI Legislative Update May 7, 2015

These updates are posted on the RSAI legislative web page at <http://www.rsaia.org/legislative.html>.

You are cordially invited to join us on Wednesday, May 20, 2015 at the West Des Moines Marriott from 6:00-8:00PM to celebrate the first year successes of Rural School Advocates of Iowa. There will be a 15 minute program to start the event. Complimentary appetizers and drinks will be served. This event is organized to make the most of your mileage, for those attending the ISFIS conference on Thursday, May 21. All are welcome, regardless of RSAI member status. Bring your good questions or just stop by to say hello.

To RSVP for this event, please email Traci Giles at traci.giles@isfis.net with the names of those that will be attending.

[Register here](#) for the ISFIS Conference and be sure to join us for the Advocating for Equity session as 2 RSAI board members share success of the 2015 Session and talk about priorities still on the table.

The following provides analysis of this week's statehouse action. Reports of a deal on school aid, fast handling of most of the big appropriations bills, and legislators sent home Wednesday evening, all indicate getting closer to the end of session. See details about tentative deal on the state cost per pupil and keep talking to legislators about adequate school funding, including setting the FY 2017 rate before they adjourn as well. Thanks for all you do to advocate for Iowa's children! margaret.buckton@isfis.net

Three RSAI priority issues for conversations, in addition to adequate funding which ought to be in every conversation:

- PPEL flexibility for bus repair: Thanks to all House and Senate members who unanimously supported this bill, now to the Governor. *PPEL Flexibility was a priority issue for RSAI's legislative platform in the 2015 Session. Thanks to all who came to Capitol and advocated from home to get this done!*
- Dropout prevention flexibility: RSAI supports the DE proposal to blend uses of at-risk and dropout prevention funding, so we can locally determine how best to serve at-risk students. Flexibility language is included in both the House and Senate versions of the Education Appropriations bill, indicating smooth sailing to the Governor's desk on this issue.
- Extend the state penny sunset: SF 477 was approved by the full Senate, 37:13. RSAI supports full repeal of the sunset but clearly supports the extension to Dec. 31, 2049 proposed in this bi-partisan bill, still assigned to the House Ways and Means Committee.

School Funding: Tentative Deal Reported

SF 171 & SF 172 State Cost Per Pupil: The conference committee has not reconvened to consider any deals or recent proposals, but that is the likely next step. Several reports of a deal surfaced last night and this morning, indicating agreement for the 1.25%, or \$80 per pupil in the formula, plus an additional one-time payment of an estimated \$55 million to reach an equivalent amount of funds at the Senate's 2.625% level. Many unknown assumptions may impact what this funding level looks like for each district. Stay tuned for more information as we find out more. Keep talking to legislators about FY 2017, too. Additional media coverage of the school funding deal:

- Radio Iowa coverage of the details: <http://www.radioiowa.com/2015/05/06/tentative-deal-in-the-works-could-end-school-funding-stand-off/>
- Iowa Public Radio coverage of the details: <http://iowapublicradio.org/post/tentative-agreement-school-aid-could-break-impasse-adjournment>

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- Sioux City Journal, Iowa school funding deal reached, legislator tweets:
http://siouxcityjournal.com/news/local/iowa-s-school-funding-deal-reached-legislator-tweets/article_27aef2d2-5daa-57e9-abb0-0144726dbed4.html

Governor Branstad weighs in on wanting a 2-year school aid budget before they adjourn. As quoted in today's [Des Moines Register article](#), *Branstad wants 2-year school aid bill, raps Senate Medicaid plan*: "Branstad said he will reserve judgment on the proposed education deal. But he particularly wants to avoid another extended fight over education funding next year because of the uncertainty it creates for school officials trying to develop plans for the upcoming academic year.

"This is long overdue and it needs to be resolved, and it needs to be resolved for both years, not just one," the governor said."

State Revenue Report: Due to both revenue growth and fewer refunds to taxpayers, revenues are growing at 5.3%, or \$278 million year-to-date through May 6, 2015. The May 1 [Monthly Revenue Memo](#) also confirms the economy is on track to meet the REC estimates, showing strong employment, withholding and sales tax numbers.

Budget: Appropriations Bills make great progress this week

| Bill # | Appropriations Area | Orig. Chamber Action | Second Chamber Action |
|------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| HF 630 | Federal Block Grants | House Approved 4/15 | Senate Approved 4/29 (done) |
| HF 637 | Transp & Infrastructure/Capitals | House Approved 4/21 | Senate Approved 5/5 (done) |
| HF 650 | RIIF | House Approved 4/29 | Senate Committee amended 5/6 |
| HF 658 | Education | House Approved 4/30 | Senate amended 5/6, House refuses Senate Amendment |
| HF 659 | Admin & Reg | House Approved 4/30 | Senate amended 5/6, House refuses Senate Amendment |
| SF 494 | Ag & Natural Resources | Conference Committee | 5/7/2015 |
| SF 496 | Judicial Branch | Conference Committee | 5/7/2015 |
| SF 497 | Justice System | Conference Committee | 5/7/2015 |
| SF 499 | Economic Dev | Conference Committee | 5/7/2015 |

This Week's Legislative Action

[HF 646](#) PPEL Flexibility for Transportation Repair: This bill allows districts to use PPEL funds to repair or maintain transportation equipment if the costs of the repair for a unit of equipment exceed \$2,500, beginning July 1, 2015. Senate unanimously approved the bill, now to the Governor. RSAI supports.

Have a great weekend!

We will report further action when it happens. In the meantime, keep advocating for the students in your schools! RSAI Professional Advocate, Margaret.buckton@isfis.net 515.201.3755

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