

RSAI Legislative Update Feb. 6, 2015

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

RSAI Learning Opportunity and Conversation - the relevance of rural schools to your communities and considering your future: The RSAI leadership group has engaged the talent and energy of David Lyons, who has held numerous leadership positions in the public sector (Iowa Insurance Commissioner, Economic Development Director,) the private sector (for profit and non-profit entities,) and rural development (Farm Bureau Federation and The Iowa Institute), to help facilitate a discussion with you about the future of rural schools and what you need that can be collectively accomplished with RSAI support. The regular business meeting of the RSAI leadership group will immediately follow, from 5-6:00 p.m. Members are invited to stay if interested.

Where: FFA Enrichment Center in Ankeny, on DMACC's Campus, from 3-5:00, on Wed., Feb 11. There is no cost to attend, but please register your intent to join us [here](#).

The following provides analysis of this week's happenings. Thanks for all you do to advocate for Iowa's children! margaret.buckton@isfis.net

Senate Education Committee Moves School Funding at 4% for FY 2016 & FY 2017

See the Feb. 6 RSAI call to action on School Funding for additional details and talking points posted [here](#).

Virtual petition on adequate school funding: go here to let the legislature know that education funding should be the priority and share this link with others in your school district or other Iowans you know supportive of funding education. <https://www.change.org/p/the-iowa-legislature-provide-adequate-funding-for-iowa-s-public-schools?>

The Senate Education Committee passed bills on school funding on Thurs., Feb 5, setting a 4% increase for regular program and categorical funds for FY 2016 and a 4% increase for both in FY 2017. The bills were approved on a party line vote in committee with all democrats in favor and all republicans present opposed. Bill numbers follow (RSAI is registered as indicated):

- [SF 171](#) Sets state cost per pupil increase at 4% for FY2016 (RSAI supports)
- [SF 172](#) Sets categorical increase at 4% for FY 2016 (RSAI supports)
- [SF 174](#) Sets state cost per pupil increase at 4% for FY 2017 (RSAI supports)
- [SF 175](#) Sets categorical increase at 4% for FY 2017 (RSAI supports)

The committee also passed [SF 173](#) to replace property tax associated with the 4% increase with state aid in FY 2016 and [SF 176](#) which does the same only if a growth rate for FY 2017 is approved by the House. Those bills were approved unanimously and RSAI is registered as undecided.

	Impact of 1.25% FY 2016	Impact of 4.0% FY 2016	Impact of 6% FY 2016
New state cost per pupil and per pupil increase compared to FY 2015	\$6,446 / \$80	\$6,621 / \$255	\$6,748 / \$382
Number of districts on budget guarantee	163	58	27
Property taxes to fund budget guarantee	\$16.5 million	\$3.3 million	\$1.1 million
Number of districts with negative new money	31	18	15
Number of districts in which a 3% cost exceeds new money	274	149	73

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Other Action:

[SSB 1101](#) Preschool Expansion Incentive: This bill creates a three-year PK expansion incentive available to school districts that increase PK enrollment compared to the current base year and provide additional flexibility of PK funding, including additional administrative cap at 10% and the ability to expend funds for rent, prorated transportation, outreach and other costs. RSAI is registered in favor.

[SSB 1099](#) Weighting for Low-Income Students: This bill, approved last year by the Senate, but dead in the House, would assign a 4% weighting to students eligible for Free and Reduced Lunch, or \$255 per low-income student. The bill allows district flexibility in providing program and resources and allows other students not from low-income families to participate in the programs as long as their participation is funded from other funds. RSAI is registered in favor of this bill, which was approved by the subcommittee and is assigned to the Senate Education Committee.

[SSB 1058](#) Elimination of School Start Date Waiver: This bill would eliminate the Sept. 1 school start date and the waiver process, giving local control to school boards to determine when school starts. The education groups which have polled legislators are not confident there are enough votes to get the bill through the Senate. We hear of compromise conversations, but are registered in favor of this bill.

[SSB 1048](#) Licensure of Child Care Programs by DHS: This bill, requested by the DE, would eliminate the provision that child care programs run by school districts could choose to follow DE standards rather than DHS standards for regulation. RSAI is registered opposed to this bill.

[SF 77](#) ELL Weighting and Years of Service: This bill increases the weighting for limited English proficient students from 0.22 to 0.30 (effective \$1,910 per ELL student) and extended the eligibility from 5 years to 7 years. The ELL Task Force in 2013 issued recommendations including increasing the weighting to 0.39, which is the national average additional funding for ELL. Access the task force report here: [ELLTaskForceFinalReport.pdf](#) RSAI is registered in favor of this bill.

[HF 97](#) Online Learning/Virtual Academy Open Enrollment: The House Education committee approved this bill on Feb. 5 on a primarily party-line vote with republicans in favor. The bill repeals the sunset of the two virtual academies, housed at Clayton Ridge and CAM-Anita school districts. The committee amended to bill to changing surveying and reporting requirements. Although the bill removes the sunset provision allowing the programs to continue, it does not lift the attendance caps. RSAI is registered opposed to the bill. See the DE's report to the legislature, [2015 Legislative Report Virtual Schools.pdf](#) which shows a 30% drop/withdrawal rate for students enrolled in the Academies.

[HF 139](#) Timing for Setting State Cost Per Pupil: This bill requires the legislature to set the state percent of growth and the categorical state percent of growth for a budget year beginning July 1 of an odd-numbered calendar year within 30 days of the submission of the governor's budget in that odd-numbered calendar year. The bill requires the legislature to set the state percent of growth and the categorical state percent of growth for a budget year beginning July 1 of an even-numbered calendar year during the regular legislative session preceding the base year (also in the odd-numbered year). This process would allow a two-year budgeting decision every other year, essentially similar to what is happening this year since the funding level for FY 2015 was not set in the 2014 Session.

See last year's Cedar Rapids Gazette [editorial](#) for a good explanation of why the priority of school funding ought to be 18 months ahead of the school year and within 30 days of the Governor's budget every year: The bill was approved on party lines in the House with 55 ayes and 43 nays on Feb. 5. RSAI is opposed to this bill which is now assigned to the Senate Education Committee. During floor debate, Rep. Jorgensen said the timing of the decision on state aid would be part of the final negotiations on the eventual percentage.

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HF 156 PK Expenditure Flexibility: This bill was approved by the House Education Committee, and would allow proration of transportation costs for PK students, outreach activities and rent of facilities as allowable administrative expenditures and increases the administrative expenditure cap to 10%, with the flexibility applying retroactively to FY 2015. RSAI is registered in support of this bill.

HSB 61 and SSB 1074 At-risk and Dropout Prevention Flexibility: These bills, requested by the DE, would allow funds from either pot to pay for the uses of at-risk funding provided through the school aid formula or dropout prevention funding provided primarily by property taxes. Since local districts have more flexibility to identify the definition of student at-risk, this flexibility would allow use of dropout prevention funds earlier in the school experience when use of the dollars might actually prevent later difficulties for students. RSAI is registered in favor of these bills.

Subcommittee action will continue over the coming weeks so we will keep you posted. Continue to connect with all legislators about funding Iowa schools adequately.

This week's Advocacy Plan: Generate contacts from grassroots networks, staff and school leaders and recruit petition signatures on adequate school funding: go here to let the legislature know that education funding should be the priority and share this link with others in your school district or other Iowans you know supportive of funding education. <https://www.change.org/p/the-iowa-legislature-provide-adequate-funding-for-iowa-s-public-schools?>

Request that the Legislature set the state cost per pupil for FY 2016 ASAP in the 2015 Session. Target contacts to local legislators in both parties and chambers, legislative leadership, and the Governor and Lt. Governor. Find resources on the RSAI web site, including the most recent call to action, the weekly Education Fact from the Education Coalition, contact information and talking points. <http://www.rsaia.org/legislative.html>. These weekly updates are also posted on this page.

Let us know how we can help with your advocacy efforts.

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