

RSAI Legislative Update Feb. 12, 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 and others joined 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 about the future of rural schools and what can be collectively accomplished with RSAI support. Stay tuned for more opportunities coming your way as ideas continue to be generated. Thanks to all of you who participated in the meeting! Thanks also to those of you who came to the Capitol in the last couple of weeks, whether as part of a superintendent's AEA lobby day or with another group. It's critical that legislators hear from you about the importance of funding and flexibility for rural schools to support a quality education for our students. If you need any additional materials or follow up to those conversations, or prep work for an upcoming forum, or letter editing, please don't hesitate to ask.

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 Floor 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?>

These bills were approved by the Senate and are now assigned to the House Education Committee, with Subcommittee of Reps. Jorgensen, Dolecheck and Ruff. Details follow:

The Senate passed bills on school funding on Tues., Feb 10, 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 with all democrats in favor and all republicans opposed 26:24. The Senate engaged in a lively debate about the priority of public education vs. a sound budget practice, not overcommitting to an "unsustainable" amount for school aid. A few Democrat senators suggested that the commercial and industrial property tax reform of 2013 goes too far and could be slowed down to create room in the budget for school aid. There were other suggestions for reducing expenditures or increasing revenue elsewhere. 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 Senate 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. See last week's report for cost per pupil and budget guarantee impacts at various levels of growth.

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Other Action: 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. Here are some bills we think might interest you:

[SF227](#) 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 Senate Education Committee approved the bill with 3 senators opposed, Sen. Johnson, Behn and Schultz. RSAI is registered in favor of this bill. [HF 13](#), similar bill in the House, was amended to a hard Aug. 23 date with no early start waivers, including a penalty of one day's worth of state aid for each day school begins early. We have asked for an amendment to allow attendance centers with year-round school to continue waiver without penalty. With the amendment instituting an Aug. 23 compromise, RSAI will switch our registration to undecided. We were previously registered for the bill.

[SSB 1047](#) Payments for Education Services while in PMIC: This bill requires the district of residence to pay the actual cost of education for student placed in the PMIC or other residential placement. The bill originally stated that the district of residence was not responsible if the student was placed voluntarily by placement. We have suggested an amendment to remove that exception and the DE and subcommittee members seemed amenable to that suggestion. The DE is also offering some language to allow the district of residence to claim the student with foster care billing if the student was home schooled, from nonpublic school, or otherwise not included on the district's enrollment count. With the amendment, RSAI will change registration from undecided to support.

[SSB 1138](#): Compulsory Attendance Age: This bill increases the age of compulsory attendance from 16 to 18. RSAI is registered in favor. We acknowledge that we need adequate funding for alternative delivery models for educating students not well served by their previous school experience.

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.

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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