



March 4, 2016

RSAI Call to Action

Encourage Legislators to Find Consensus on School Funding

The Issue: The legislature has not yet set the cost per pupil for the school year beginning 2016 (action required in the 2015 session per Iowa law) or the cost per pupil for the school year beginning July 1, 2017 (now 3 weeks past due.) Schools need to know the revenue they will receive long before the school year begins to meet planning, budgeting and bargaining deadlines, as well as fully engage in school reform efforts. Any delay in setting the rate will stymie the very school improvement the bi-partisan legislature and governor created in 2013. Those deadlines are already in play for the 2016-17 school year budget. Setting the per pupil cost this session for the 2017-18 school year maintains the bi-partisan priority status of educating Iowa children.

Current Status: RSAI is registered in favor of 4% and opposed to 2% for the two bills now in a conference committee, appointed to work out the differences. [SF 174](#) and [SF 175](#) originally set the increase in the state per pupil cost and categorical funds at 4%. House amended those levels to 2%. Committee appointees include:

Senator Herman Quirnbach: herman.quirnbach@legis.iowa.gov
 Senator Tod Bowman: tod.bowman@legis.iowa.gov
 Senator Robert Dvorsky: robert.dvorsky@legis.iowa.gov
 Senator Tim Kraayenbrink: tim.kraayenbrink@legis.iowa.gov
 Senator Amy Sinclair: amy.sinclair@legis.iowa.gov
 Representative Ron Jorgensen: ron.jorgensen@legis.iowa.gov
 Representative Patti Ruff: patti.ruff@legis.iowa.gov
 Representative Cecil Dolecheck: cecil.dolecheck@legis.iowa.gov
 Representative Quentin Stanerson: quentin.stanerson@legis.iowa.gov
 Representative Cindy Winckler: cindy.winckler@legis.iowa.gov

Although the committee met for an organizational meeting to appoint chairs, weeks ago, they have not reconvened since. The chairs from the House and Senate have been talking regularly. We expect something to break the log jam very soon. [SF 2092](#) and [SF 2093](#) set 4% increase in the cost per student for FY 2018, approved by the Senate on Feb. 15 and sent to the House. No House action has happened since. *Keep talking with legislators about timing, adequacy and equity of funding.*

Messages to House and Senate, both sides of the aisle, regarding the need for adequate and timely funding, are encouraged this weekend and into next week. 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. Access the Education Coalition Feb. 25 edition, which shows the cost of doing the business of education and comparisons of economic changes over time, for additional background. [02/25/16 - Education Funding and the Cost of Doing Business](#)
- Districts with declining enrollment are having to make more program and staff reductions to live within tighter constraints. Growing districts can't afford needed new staff.



- In the last five years, state net revenue growth has averaged 4.1% while the cost per pupil growth has averaged 2.0%. In FY 2015, state general fund revenue growth was 6.2%, while the state cost per pupil for July 1, 2015 was only increased by 1.25%. Schools haven't experienced the economic recovery that the state has enjoyed.
- To put students and opportunities first, schools need adequate, predictable and timely funding.
- Business leaders agree. The March 2, 2016 Des Moines Register included a letter by Chamber of Commerce leaders in Des Moines, Cedar Rapids, Iowa City and Dubuque, calling for a 3% compromise. See the letter here:
<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/columnists/iowa-view/2016/03/01/chamber-leaders-boost-aid-schools-least-3/81179218/>
- Parents also are advocating for adequate school funding. The February 26, 2016 Des Moines Register included a letter from two parents in the Des Moines area, asking "When will public schools get proper support, funding?," found here
<http://www.desmoinesregister.com/story/opinion/abetteriowa/2016/02/26/when-public-schools-get-proper-support-funding/80814728/>

Parents, grandparents, staff and neighbors, you can help!

Call or email Gov. Branstad and Lt. Gov. Reynolds and your legislators and leave a message that schools need sufficient school funding set quickly this session.

Office of the Governor: State Capitol | 1007 East Grand Ave. | Des Moines, Iowa 50319, Phone: 515.281.5211 | [Contact Us](https://governor.iowa.gov/contact/) (https://governor.iowa.gov/contact/)

To reach members of the Iowa House and Senate:.

- Find your legislator here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/Legislators/find.aspx>
- Email your legislators. You're welcome to use the sample provided below on page 3. The correct email address configuration is: firstname.lastname@legis.iowa.gov
- Call the House Switchboard (M-TH) Leave a message for your representative at 515.281.3221
- Call the Senate Switchboard (M-TH). Leave a message for your senator at 515.281.3371

Write a letter to your local newspaper explaining the information above in this call to action or sharing details from the education coalition publication.

Additional RSAI Advocacy Resources: RSAI has updated the legislative page of our website with sample parent letters on adequate school funding, transportation and district cost per pupil inequities. Instructions for writing to legislators are included in the packet found here [Sample Parent Letters](#)