**RSAI Legislative Update
April 18, 2019**

In this RSAI Report of the 2019 Legislative Session, find information about:

* **SAVE moves out of Senate Ways and Means Committee with Amendment**
* **Financial Literacy Timeline stalled in the House**
* **Online Learning amended by House and Back to Senate**
* **Other bills of interest**
* **Advocacy Resources**

**Find this week’s RSAI Capitol Video Update here:** <https://youtu.be/yHk97c6YABY>

This week, the House and Senate considered only bills on the chambers’ Unfinished Business Calendars, the budget, and tax policy. The final day of per diem for legislators’ expenses is May 5, and they will strive to finish before that deadline.

Attention to the State Budget is heating up as the Session prepares to wind down. The final day of per diem for legislators’ expenses is May 5 and they will strive to finish before that deadline. There are still some important bills for rural schools that should get done.

**HF 546 SAVE Progresses in the Senate**

The Senate Ways and Means Committee met on April 17 to consider the SAVE extension. An amendment to increase the diversion to the PTER fund for property tax equity and property tax relief was approved on party lines, with Republicans in favor and Democrats opposed. The bill was approved as amended, 22 in support, with only Sen. Chapman voting no.

**Details about the PTER Fund:**

* Current law is 2.1%.  The increased diversion to PTER will happen gradually, growing by 1% annually if sales tax revenue meets growth targets. The 16%-30% diversion is estimated to phase in no earlier than 2033 through 2049.
* RSAI does not like the additional diversion and would prefer that all of the money go to school infrastructure.  However, without this amendment, the bill would die in committee.  We do not believe that time will improve the politics of this situation given the current make-up of the Senate or delay until next Session which is an election year, which tends to elevate calls for additional tax relief.
* On the bright side, the dedication of this revenue to property tax relief might save them from dedicating even more state general fund revenues for that purpose, and there is no greater beneficiary of preserved state general funds than public education.  For those districts that are property poor, closer tax equity has been a priority and is eventually served by this policy.  It might even free up local resources and support to pass a PPEL or fully fund dropout prevention or special education deficits, or put some cash behind accumulated unspent budget authority.  Most importantly, school districts will have a 30-year revenue stream to plan ahead, make schools safe, upgrade facilities and technology.
* We can work on better ways to dedicate this resource to the benefit of students over time. Right now, schools are running out of (or have run out of) bonding capacity.

Today’s $471.4 million in SAVE allocation to schools grows every year under this proposed amendment, eventually hitting $809.6 million in 2050. At that time, a maximum of $349.1 million will go to lowering school property taxes, assuming no revisiting of the policy over the next 30 years.

At this point, RSAI is expressing our dislike of the property tax relief allocation increase, but still encouraging the Senate to support the bill and get it back to the House.  RSAI is registered in support.

**Financial Literacy Implementation Stalled in House:**  [HF 420](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=hf420) and [SF 139](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=sf139) are still on the House Calendar but have stalled. SF 139 was approved 48:0 in the Senate. The identical SF 420 was approved 22:1 in the House Education Committee. House Leadership has expressed concern that schools have had enough time to implement. RSAI Supports this bill. See the [April 17 RSAI Call to Action](http://nebula.wsimg.com/47a134caae942434bfcc8c7b335c6f33?AccessKeyId=D081CCCCA2DCE3941176&disposition=0&alloworigin=1) to find background, status and talking points. Continue to contact your Representative about the need to provide some relief from the timeline. Although RSAI would prefer a 4-year delay, a delay of at least one-year is critical.

[**SF 394**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/billTracking/billHistory?billName=SF%20394&ga=88) **Online Learning:** this bill allows school districts flexibility to meet accreditation requirements four ways in addition to teaching courses at the high school; offer Iowa Learning Online courses, develop online courses by the school district, develop online courses in partnership with other schools or through private provider approved by DE. The bill was approved unanimously in the Senate 49:0, amended by the House to strike a vague phrase about good faith effort, sending it back to the Senate. RSAI supports.

**Other Bills of Interest:**

[**SF 159**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=sf159) **Praxis Test Score:** this bill authorizes the DE to set a minimum passing score for the Praxis test for completion of a teacher preparation program to receive an initial teaching license. The bill requires DE to consider passing scores in neighboring states and supply and demand imbalance of teachers in the content area in setting the minimum score. The bill allows a one-year waiver for a new teacher with an Iowa school district job offer to complete the test if the teacher did not get a passing score, and defines good faith efforts to school districts to show they were not able to hire a qualified licensed applicant to meet their expectations. The bill was approved 48:0 in the Senate. It was approved by the House 71:28. This week, the bill was signed by the Governor. RSAI is registered in support.

[**SF 283**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=sf283) **Conflict of Interest Threshold:** this bill increases the threshold of a school board member’s income from a district or interest in a contract to no more than $6,000 without creating a conflict of interest. Current threshold is $2,500. This bill was approved in the Senate 45:3, in the House 97:0, sending it to the Governor. RSAI supports.

[**SF 625**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ba=SF%20625&ga=88) **Empower Rural Iowa Initiative:** this bill is a governor’s priority to create an initiative that provides incentives for broadband connectivity and workforce housing in rural Iowa. The bill is on the Senate calendar. Companion HF 772 is on the House Calendar. RSAI supports.

[**HF 596**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=%24selectedGa.generalAssemblyID&ba=hf596) **WGS and Reorg Incentives:** this bill extends the whole grade sharing and reorganization incentives for five more years, through 2024. The bill was approved in the House today, 97:0 sending it to the Senate, where an identical bill, SF 602 is on the Senate Calendar. RSAI supports.

[**HF 598**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/billTracking/billHistory?billName=HF%20598&ga=88) **Siblings in Classes:** this bill requires school administrators to defer to parents of siblings regarding class placement. The bill gives the administrator more authority to appropriately place siblings under certain conditions. The bill was approved by the House 91:5, and approved this week in the Senate, 44:5. That sends it to the Governor. RSAI was opposed.

[**HF 637**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=hf637) **Reporting of School Misconduct**: this bill requires school districts to report certain school employee misconduct to the Board of Education Examiners within 30 days of a disciplinary action. The bill was approved 98:0 in the House. Approved by the Senate April 17, 50:0, sending it to the Governor. RSAI was registered as undecided on the bill.

[**HF 690**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=hf690) **Children’s Mental Health**: this bill sets up a mental health services system for children. As of this form, there is no mandate on schools for mental health screenings of children or other requirements of schools. There are benchmarks for mental health providers to deliver attendance and academic performance targets for students. The bill was approved in the House 83:14, in the Senate 46:2, sending it to the Governor. RSAI is registered as undecided.

[**HF 609**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=hf609) **ISL** **Legalizing Act** was authored on behalf of a district that missed an important deadline in getting their instructional support levy in their budget. The bill is a legalizing act which deems their ISL to be legal. It was approved by House 96:1 today, sending it over to the Senate where it is assigned to the Senate Education Committee. RSAI supports.

[**SF 603**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=88&ba=sf603) **Concurrent Enrollment/STEM:** this bill increases the supplementary weighting for liberal arts concurrent enrollment courses from .46 to .50. The bill allows a district with an agreement with a community college that provides a course or teacher employed by the community college for a math and a science course, to use that course to meet Offer and Teach Requirements. The bill limits supplementary weighting for districts using the course to meet offer and teach requirements to those districts with more than 5 in the course and fewer than 600 students enrolled in the district. The bill defines “full-time” and “part-time” student as a full-time student enrolled in 24 or more postsecondary credit hours. The cost of coursework in excess of full-time will be the responsibility of the student or guardian. The bill expands concurrent enrollment to include academic and CTE courses offered to students of accredited nonpublic schools under a contract with a community college; limits weighting for non-public students if the number of students enrolled in the class exceeds five, and the total enrollment in grades 9-12 does not exceed 200; and requires the state to pay the community college directly for courses offered to non-public school students. The bill was approved by the Senate 49:0, and is assigned to the House Appropriations, with Reps. Deyoe, Kerr, and Running-Marquardt assigned as subcommittee members. RSAI supports.

[**HF 758**](https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislation/BillBook?ga=%24selectedGa.generalAssemblyID&ba=hf758) **Education Appropriations;** this billappropriates funds for many purposes in education, including community college general aid, funding for regents universities, funding for the college student aid commission and the DE. The bill was amended in the Senate Education Appropriations Subcommittee to strike the $3 million to the AEAs for MH training and supports and eliminates $500,000 appropriation for Iowa Learning Online. The bill also continues the $15 million cut to AEAs and zero state match for ISL, but the Senate Committee deleted these provision and the appropriation for nonpublic school transportation from this bill, with the intent of including those provisions in the Standings Appropriations bill, which is historically where they have been included. The bill was amended and approved in the Senate Appropriations Committee today. RSAI is undecided.

**Advocacy Resources**

To find Advocacy Resources such as Calls to Action, Position Papers, RSAI Weekly Legislative Reports and video updates, RSAI Calls to Action when immediate advocacy action is required, testimony presented to the State Board of Education, the DE or any legislative committee or public hearing, and links to fiscal information that may inform your work, visit the RSAI legislative web page here: <http://www.rsaia.org/legislative.html>

Contact us with any questions, feedback or suggestions to better prepare your advocacy work:

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**Legislator Contact Information follows:** Find out who your legislators are through the interactive map or address search posted on the Legislative Website here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>

To call and leave a message at the statehouse during session, the House switchboard operator number is 515.281.3221 and the Senate switchboard operator number is 515.281.3371. You can ask if they are available or leave a message for them to call you back.