



## RSAI Legislative Update March 13, 2025

This RSAI Weekly Report from the 2025 Legislative Session includes:

- Property Tax Overhaul Information, Subcommittee Members and Next Steps
- Floor Action This Week in the House and Senate
- Instructional Materials Transparency Bill gets a new Bill Number: HF 929
- SSA Still Stuck: Create Advocacy Moments
- Advocacy Actions for the Week and Resources

### **Property Tax Overhaul Announced**

Bills were introduced last week, [HSB 313](#) and [SSB 1208](#), which make multiple changes to Iowa’s system of property taxes that the lawmakers said would provide an estimated \$426 million in property tax cuts. Subcommittees of five members were assigned in each chamber. If your district is represented by one of these legislators, please try to reach out and engage with them sometime in the next week to 10 days. Subcommittee members include:

- SSB 1208 Sens. Dawson, Bisignano, Driscoll, Petersen, and Rowley.
- HSB 313 Reps. Kaufmann, Bloomingdale, McBurney, Wilson and Wulf.

Next steps: Sen. Dawson and Rep. Kaufmann expected about two weeks for stakeholders to digest the proposal before subcommittees meet. We would expect to see subcommittee meetings scheduled during the week of March 24 at the earliest based on their plan, if that doesn’t change.

Although school leaders might support some provisions in the bill now (e.g., returns the Sales Tax Infrastructure funds back to SAVE that would otherwise have been property tax relief), the policies in these bills are very much a work in progress and could change with each step through committees and chambers. See possible questions or advocacy steps below. Access the [ISFIS Bill Summary](#).

### **Floor Action in House and Senate (and Governor’s Signature on a Bill)**

**SF 171 School Dissolutions:** Makes the effective date for territorial changes related to a school district dissolution election to start on July 1 of the calendar year immediately subsequent to the year the attachment was approved for dissolutions approved after January 2025. (Clean-up for Orient-Macksburg that had a dissolution election timing hiccup.) Senate passed it 44-0, House passed it 92-0, Governor signed it, March 12, 2025

### **House Floor Action (sending all of these bills over to the Senate)**

- **HF 299 Immunization Exemption Requirements:** requires that information on exemptions be included with any recommendations of immunization by the HHS. Requires schools and daycare centers to publish such information on the internet and to

include it in any notices to parents on immunization. Requires the state BOE to adopt rules. Requires community colleges and the Regent schools to include information on exemptions in any notices on immunization requirements. The House adopted the bill 58-30. RSAI is undecided.

- **HF 315 School Budget Adjustments:** makes school districts that are in a major disaster area and that receive a budget adjustment eligible for a second budget adjustment. The House adopted the bill 88-1. RSAI supports.
- **HF 316 Credential Certificates & Career Planning:** Requires DE to develop seals that can be affixed to High School transcripts that show a student has achieved an industry-recognized credential prior to graduation. Requires DE to create a list of approved credentials. Establishes reporting requirements for schools. Makes changes to career planning and pathway courses for grades 5-8. The House adopted the as bill as amended, 61-28. RSAI is undecided.
- **HF 393 Measuring School Dropouts:** Does not count the second dropout in school performance measures of a student who had previously dropped out, returns to school and drops out again. The House adopted the bill 89-2. RSAI supports.
- **HF 513 8th Graders in HS Sports:** Requires public and private schools to allow 8th-graders to compete in high school sports if the 8th grader meets academic standards. The House adopted the bill 89-2. RSAI is undecided.
- **HF 390 Childcare Worker Physicals:** Strikes the requirement that an employee in a childcare facility receive a pre-employment physical. Amended to allow the post-employment physical to be six months after hire. The House adopted the bill as amended 67-28. RSAI is undecided.
- **HF 515 Shared School Resource Positions:** Increases the weighting for a shared SRO to four pupils. The House adopted the bill 95-0. RSAI supports.
- **HF 579 Dropout Prevention Cap:** Increases the maximum modified supplement for dropout prevention programs from 2.5% to a maximum of 5%. Includes provisions on approving the amount at an election and phases in an increase (0.25% per year). The bill was amended during the floor consideration to allow an increase of 0.5% per year. The House adopted the bill as amended 92-4. RSAI supports.

#### **Senate Floor Action (sending all of these bills over to the House)**

- **SF 277 School Absences:** Requires DE to develop, in consultation with county attorneys, a model policy for county attorneys to consider for enforcing truancy provisions. Adds activities to the exempt absences from school, including for military entrance purposes and to attend weddings and funerals. Requires school policies to include reasonable travel time. Adds additional ways to contact the parent of a chronically absent student and eliminates the requirement for certified mail. Requires school officials to use the school engagement process for students who are absent more than 15% of the time in a grading period if the official determines absences have negatively impacted student achievement. The Senate adopted the bill 47-0. RSAI supports.
- **SF 176 Open Enrolled Extracurriculars:** Allows a student open-enrolled in an online school to participate in extracurricular activities in the district of residence if the online school does not offer the activities. This bill is limiting, as these students are sometimes

choosing an online program in a neighboring district that offers the activity, but choosing to participate in the activity in their resident district. The Senate adopted the bill 47-0. RSAI supports.

- **SF 472 Certification Elections:** Requires the Employment Appeal Board to issue a notice of a certification/recertification election to a public employer. Requires the employer to give a list of employees within 10 days and for the EAB to use the list to determine the employees eligible to vote. Requires the EAB to publish on the internet the employers that have not submitted a list. Allows an lowan to seek a writ of mandamus to compel action by the EAB within 60 days of the failure of the EAB to list the eligible employees. Includes expedited court procedures and awards for attorney fees and costs to compel employer action. Allows timelines for elections to be extended. Effective on enactment. The Senate adopted the bill 32-15. RSAI is undecided.

### **HF 929 New Instructional Materials Publication Mandate (on the House Calendar)**

This bill, from the House Education Committee, was assigned a new bill number this week, placing it on the House Calendar. The bill increases posting requirements which will take teacher time to comply, and administrator time to enforce, and most likely, new software that meets the requirements to comply. RSAI is opposed to this bill. SF 496 already established a process for reasonable access for parents to instructional materials. School boards also have policies outlining how parents can access instructional materials directly from teachers. The bill includes the following provisions:

- Expands the definition of 'instructional materials' to include a broader range of educational resources including worksheets, lesson plans, videos and materials sourced on the internet and mandates that school districts maintain and publicly update lists of these materials. Includes specific requirements for timely updates.
- Establishes a process for parents and guardians to request the exclusion of certain materials for their children (schools already have parent opt-out policies).
- Allows the school board to seek a formal opinion of the Attorney General or county attorney as to whether a school district's actions comply with the requirements.
- Outlines the steps necessary for civil action against school districts for non-compliance, which can be initiated by a parent, the DE director or the Attorney General. Allows courts to award reasonable attorney fees and court costs.
- Specifies that this is not an unfunded mandate since school districts receive school foundation aid.

### **School Funding / SSA Still Stuck**

**SF 167** SSA by the Senate sets the increase per pupil cost at 2%. The House proposal amended SF 167 with Amendment **S-3004** awaiting action on the Senate Calendar. The additional investments in the House proposal include: 1) \$10 per pupil applied to the minimum state cost per pupil, to close the district cost per pupil equity gap to \$130, 2) an increase in the transportation equity fund sufficient to reimburse all districts with transportation costs per pupil above the state average, 3) increase in the operational sharing student weighting cap from 21 to 25, and 4) supplemental appropriation of \$23.6 million distributed to districts based on enrollment, estimated at \$47 per pupil, in the 2025-26 fiscal year. This supplemental

appropriation is one time and not expected to carry forward into the future. RSAI is registered in support of the House proposal and opposed to the Senate proposal. See your February 26, 2025 report, for additional information on SSA proposals.

### **RSAI Advocacy Resources**

Check out the updated 2025 Session Advocacy Handbook, with everything advocacy beginners and experienced pros can use to advocate with legislators, at the statehouse or back in your district. Find the handbook on the RSAI Advocacy Website at: <https://www.rsaia.org/2025-legislative-session.html>

### **Advocacy Actions This Week**

**Start with a thank you!** Find something on the floor action lists above that you support, and tell them you appreciate that they moved it forward. If there was a particularly awful bill that died due to the funnel (see last week's report for the list), you could thank them for stopping its progress.

### **Property Tax Relief Proposals:**

- Approach the conversation with an open mind. Property taxpayers talked a lot about the issue during the election. They have to (and want to and will) do something. Offer to be a resource.
- Ask how the state will afford the bigger commitment to the school funding formula? How much property tax relief is enough?
- Brainstorm with them about unintended consequences. Can we prevent some bad outcomes (e.g., add in SBRC authority for a school board to levy the Management Fund in spite of the fund balance limitation for unusual circumstances?)
- Network with city and county leaders. Explain how schools are budget-limited through the formula (for schools, tax rates are more about valuation and enrollment changes – and it's tough, when enrollment declines, cutting the budget. Can you find common ground on the limitations or other provisions?)

**Adequate School Funding:** Contact legislators regarding SSA every week until it's done. Find teachable moments to trigger a message. For example,

- School districts sent budgets to the county on March 5 to create taxpayer statements and notify taxpayers of public hearings. The information in those notices is not likely accurate pending the final SSA decision.
- School districts will hold public hearings to get input from taxpayers on the proposed budget. The information sent by the county to taxpayers is not likely accurate pending the final SSA decision.
- Decisions to continue teaching contracts and settle negotiations are dependent on knowing the TSS per pupil for your district. That is part of the SSA bill.

- There are many bills surviving the funnel deadline that include unfunded mandates. School will count on the very best funding the state can provide to be able to fulfill any new legislated expectations.

The House's 2.25%+ is a preferable policy and RSAI is registered in support. The teacher salary investment last year was a really good start to attract future teachers, but SSA has to keep pace or our staff and programs for students will be compromised. Diverting the small increases that RSAI districts will get for TSS to charter schools will further stress public school budgets (See the March 6 report for details on [HF 789](#) TSS for Charter Schools). See the [RSAI 2025 Adequate School Resources Position Paper](#) for additional information.

**Advocacy for one-time money:** Although not ideal, the \$22.6 million one-time supplemental appropriation in the House proposal will help school districts through several transitions, including higher teacher pay minimums, higher inflation, phase-out of federal funds, and of course, the cost of any unfunded mandates that might be approved this Session and there are many. Reach out to Senators and ask them to support the House amendment including the one-time funding appropriation. Reach out to House members and thank them for voting to invest more.

**Preschool:** Encourage both Representatives and Senators to not forget public schools when considering the Governor's Child Care Continuum bills. Public schools need funding for initial preschool programs to expand access to preschool. Research shows that quality preschool for enough hours has great benefits (Perry Preschool Project, with \$17 returned benefit for every \$1 invested, had a minimum of 15 hours a week, which is 50% more time than Iowa's current SVPP funds). Your own district data on the benefits for those students in full-day preschool is really important to share. Iowa's neediest students not currently accessing either PK or child care might be best served in an all-day PK program. Serving these neediest students well will go far in achieving state priorities, including literacy and math outcomes. The Governor's grants and 1.0 weighting for most at-risk 4-year-olds are compatible policies, both necessary to establish a full continuum of care and instruction. Express thanks to House HHS and Senate Education Committee members for amending the bills to require licensed teachers in the new community provider authorized programs. See the [RSAI 2025 Quality Preschool Position Paper](#) for additional information.

**Unfunded Mandates and Implementation Timelines:** remind legislators that any bill requiring staff training or rewriting curriculum costs districts time and money. Unfunded mandates such as the mandatory Civics Test, creating individual math plans with intensive interventions, creating a new tracking software to catalog all instructional materials (including teacher time weekly to update the database) and Career Education curriculum in middle school require resources that take away other key issues of district focus. Each mandate should allow time and include funding to implement or at least an adequate increase in SSA so school districts do not have to make tough choices. Many new requirements are already on our curriculum directors' and teacher plates. State BOE has approved new standards (ELA, Science, Math) and the new literacy initiative is currently being implemented. Any additional mandates for changing

instruction that require training need thoughtful time and compliance expectations. Recent examples include cell phone policy/social media instruction, adding career exposure, planning and experience to middle school grades, a new math initiative or civics initiative, seizure disorder training and plans, gun safety training courses, and the list goes on with every new bill. Please allow the time it takes to do good work, to benefit students.

**Connecting with Legislators:** To call and leave a message at the Statehouse during the legislative 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. You can also ask them what's the best way to contact them during session. They may prefer email or text message or phone call based on their personal preferences.

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>

### **Other RSAI Advocacy Resources:**

Check out the RSAI Website at <https://www.rsaia.org/2025-legislative-session.html> to find Advocacy Resources such as Position Papers, RSAI Weekly Legislative Recap Reports and Videos, 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. Be sure to review the 2025 RSAI Advocacy Handbook.

### **Bill Action This Week**

Check out our separate Bill Tracker for all the bill actions and details for the week.

### **Contact Us**

Keep in touch with your questions, comments, and let us know about your advocacy actions.

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