

RSAI Regional Meetings in May. Thanks to all of you who attended the NW Meeting in Pocahontas or the SW Meeting in Red Oak! Whether you are an RSAI member district there to express your voice about rural school matters, or are not a member district but interested in listening and learning more about legislative issues and RSAI, we'd love to have you attend one of our remaining meetings. Find out more information or the link to register your attendance and access the agenda on the RSAI website here: <https://www.rsaia.org/region-meetings.html>

- NE Region was postponed. Watch your in box for rescheduling information soon
- SE Region, May 7, Fairfield, noon lunch, 12:30 meeting

Per Diem Expires: May 2 is final day of legislator per diem. Budget bills have been introduced and are starting conversations in their chambers of origin. The Governor and Senate Republicans announced a deal on budget targets (how much each budget bill will spend and those all add up to the state total budget). House Republicans announced their budget targets on April 29, intending to spend \$9.453 billion, which is \$36 million higher than the Governor/Senate Republican goal. Most of that \$36 million is for education, \$14 million for education support personnel supplemental salary and \$16 million in the education budget bill, mostly for universities.

Standings Appropriations Bill in the House: HSB 335 is the Standings Bill, which includes several provisions impacting PK-12 schools:

- Two years of \$14 million appropriations to DE to send to schools for education support personnel compensation for both FY 2026 and FY 2027. Requires school districts to report by July 1 the number of education support personnel employed by the district and other information required by DE. *We are asking for an Aug. 1 reporting date. If the Governor doesn't sign this bill until 30 days after it's sent to her, it could be as late as the week of June 15 before the requirement is effective.)*
- Nonpublic school transportation \$8,997,091 (same amount as FY 2025)
- Instructional Support Levy - state match of Zero (same amount as FY 2025)
- Transfers \$21.9 million from the Taxpayer Relief Fund to the state General Fund for state foundation aid
- Cuts AEAs \$25 million in addition to the \$7.5 million statutory reduction. Although this is the same amount of reduction as FY 2025, the process will be different. Since AEA funding now goes to school districts first, we expect this reduction to impact school district special education funds. It is unknown if the DOM will have the authority to reduce or prorate any of the reduction to media or educational services.
- Exempts charter schools from the electronic devices during instructional time ban.

School Funding/SSA: Although SF 167, which sets a per pupil increase of 2%, has been approved by both the House and Senate, it has not been "reported as correctly enrolled and signed by the Senate President and House Speaker", which means it's not yet to the Governor to approve. The bill includes more funding for transportation equity, funds to lower the DCP and SCPP inequity by \$5 per pupil (closes the gap to \$135 per pupil), and increases the cap on operational shared weighting to 25 students (currently 21). We expect the Governor to sign the bill when it gets to her desk. Any bill sent to the Governor during the Session must be signed or vetoed without 3 days of reaching her desk, unless it is delivered to her in the final week.

HF 787 TSS and Other Education Omnibus Bill: RSAI supports this bill which was amended in the Senate and is on the House Calendar awaiting their approval, which is expected.

SSB 1228 and HSB 328 Property Tax Overhaul Proposals Round II: Check out RSAI weekly reports for status. We remain concerned about cutting the PPEL and Debt Levy rates in half when valuation is not going to double anywhere, but especially in rural areas with concentrations of agricultural land valuation. We are hearing that the bill is in trouble and may require the Interim to review and revise. Continue connecting legislators about concerns until the Session ends.

Session Ending Advocacy: Watch your inbox for Calls to Action or end-of-the-week information to see what's getting accomplished every week until the Legislature adjourns Sine Die (leaves without a scheduled date of return). Any bills sent to the Governor in the last week of the Session have a different deadline for her action, allowing her 30 days from the last day of Session to sign or veto them. RSAI will publish a Legislative Digest of all of the bills passed or vetoed this Session impacting school districts. Stay tuned.

Building the Platform for 2026 - Survey on RSAI Priorities: after the Session ends and the dust settles, RSAI will send a survey to all members to indicate the importance of issues for the 2026 Session. Survey results will inform the Legislative Committee and Leadership Group as they work this summer to craft a draft list of legislative priorities, to be decided by members at the Annual Meeting in October. We look forward to working with you this Summer!

RSAI Advocacy Resources:

- RSAI Weekly Report and Capitol Recap Video and Bill Tracker posted here: <https://www.rsaia.org/2025-legislative-session.html>
- [2025 RSAI Advocacy Handbook](#) – includes committee membership, contacts and committee assignments. Also has a worksheet to plan your best outreach
- 2024 RSAI Legislative Digest – to review anything that happened last session [2024 RSAI Legislative Digest - Complete Digest](#) and [2024 Legislative Digest - RSAI Legislative Successes](#)
- RSAI Priorities for the 2025 Session are posted on the 2025 Legislative Session webpage [here](#)
- Show & Tell With Legislators (joint effort of RSAI & SAI) includes these resources:
 - [Show & Tell With Legislators - Planning Resource](#)
 - [Samples](#)
 - [Reporting Form](#)

Contact us with any questions, feedback or suggestions to better prepare your advocacy work.
Thanks to all of you for your energy and voice on behalf of the students in your schools!

This summary of RSAI 2025 Legislative Priorities, approved at the RSAI annual meeting, emphasizes the need for sustainable investment in Iowa's education system to meet rural school challenges of staffing, student needs, and equitable funding:

1. **Adequate Resources:** Increased State Supplemental Aid (SSA) is essential for Iowa schools to provide quality education that meets community expectations. The funding must be predictable, exceed inflation, and support effective budget planning.
 - **World-Class Education:** A 10% SSA increase (\$783 per pupil) is necessary to enhance education quality, reduce class sizes, and support staff retention.
 - **Sustain Current Status:** A 5% increase (\$392 per pupil) would help maintain competitiveness and address inflation.
 - **Continued Erosion:** A 2.5% increase (\$196 per pupil) would only partially cover rising costs, leading to potential cutbacks in services and staffing.
2. **Staff Shortages:** Policies must prioritize trust and improved compensation to attract and retain educators. Strategies include:
 - **Recruitment:** Flexibility for hiring incentives, grow-your-own programs, and continuation of apprenticeship grants which must be easier to administer.
 - **Retention:** Increased funding for salary supplements, flexibility and licensure simplification, continued IPERS improvements and support for mentoring and training.
 - **Competitive Compensation:** Addressing salary compaction issues and TSS inequities to ensure fair pay for all staff.
3. **Public School Prioritization:** Public schools should be adequately funded, and changes to Education Savings Accounts (ESAs) should ensure fair treatment between public and private schools.
4. **Addressing Student Needs:** All districts should be able to access 5% dropout prevention funding, and resources must focus on at-risk needs, with additional support for mental health services and poverty-related educational challenges.
5. **Quality Preschool Funding:** State funding for PK should be increased to 1.0 weighting for full time PK or half-time PK with wrap around services to ensure access and quality for all students, especially low-income families, and to empower parents of young children to enter the workforce.
6. **Incentives for Collaboration:** Extend incentives for whole-grade sharing, reorganization and operational sharing to enhance educational opportunities.
7. **Local Control:** Support local school boards in decision-making and provide flexibility to meet community needs.
8. **Equity in Funding Formula:** Address historical inequities in funding to ensure all students receive adequate resources.
9. **Bond Issue Simplification:** Require a simple majority to approve bond issues, offer additional special election dates, and remove the requirement for two votes to approve the total bond levy.
10. **Area Education Agencies (AEAs):** AEAs play a crucial role in supporting rural schools, and their funding and structure must be adequate to ensure continued support for essential services.