

RSAI Regional Meetings in April and May. 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. 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> (Share the date/location for the closest meeting)

- NW Region, April 1, Pocahontas, 11:30 lunch and noon meeting
- SW Region, April 2, Red Oak, 11:45 lunch and noon meeting
- NE Region, April 24, Oelwein, 2:00 meeting followed by 4:00 social
- SE Region, May 7, Fairfield, noon lunch, 12:30 meeting

Friday Second Funnel: April 4 is the second funnel deadline, by which bills must be approved by a committee in the other chamber to stay alive. Expect to see information in the weekly report, both cheerful (bills we support made it and bad bills died) but also sad (vice versa on both accounts). This also signals only one month left of legislative per diem payments, so expect to see budget bills and tax bills get attention since those typically are passed at the end are exempt from the funnels.

School Funding/SSA: Still no decision or compromise. Governor recommended 2%. Senate passed SF 167 with 2%. House amended to 2.25%, plus more for transportation equity, funds to lower the DCPD and SCPP inequity by another \$10 per pupil (closes the gap to \$130 per pupil), increases the cap on operational shared weighting to 25 students (currently 21), and includes \$22.6 million one-time funding supplement to help schools with inflationary costs. Three different RSAI priority areas are impacted. See RSAI position Papers and renew advocacy to encourage the House and Senate to come to an agreement.

- Download the [RSAI 2025 Adequate School Resources Position Paper](#)
- Download the [RSAI 2025 Formula Equity Position Paper](#)
- Download the [RSAI 2025 Operational Sharing Incentives Position Paper](#)

HF 787 TSS and Other Education Omnibus Bill: Teacher pay minimums increase to \$50K for beginning teachers (up to 12 years of experience), and \$62,000 for those with 12 years of experience or more. DOM will use Fall BEDS data from Oct. 2024. This bill, approved by the House and on the Senate Calendar, requires DOM to calculate the amount needed for every district to pay the new minimums (including employer share of FICA and IPERS). It includes a process to correct errors, such as experience incorrectly reported which hurt the FY 2025 amounts. The bill also grows the TSS per pupil by the SSA dollar increase (2% or 2.25% of state TSS per pupil). Other policies in this bill: Reinstates the TeachIowa Job Posting site, provides flexibility for teacher interns with classroom experience to minimize student teaching, allows districts to pay retired teachers returning to classrooms, while collecting IPERS, a minimum of \$50,000. The bill also sets up a shared responsibility for the excess costs of out-of-state placements to come off the top of state foundation aid for all school districts on a per pupil basis (does not negatively impact spending authority). RSAI supports this bill.

SF 277 Chronic Absenteeism Clean-up: The bill fixes the certified letter issue by allowing school districts many ways to contact parents once students meet the chronic absenteeism threshold, clarifies exceptions and adds a few more (funerals, military application and service and reasonable travel time), requires the DE and the County Attorneys Association to develop model policies county attorneys may use regarding truancy actions, allows districts discretion on school engagement meetings, which must be provided for students needing support, but would not be required for students for whom absences

are not negatively impacting achievement. RSAI requested many of the provisions in this bill. We hope to see it on the House Education Committee meeting agenda before the April 4 funnel deadline.

SSB 1208 and HSB 313 Property Tax Overhaul Proposal: The bills eliminate the residential and commercial rollbacks over several years (significantly increasing valuation). The bills lower the school uniform levy gradually over that same phase-in period to offset some of what would have otherwise been a property tax increase due to elimination of the rollbacks. The bills simultaneously require the state to pay the school foundation formula costs of the additional levy, estimated at around \$375 million and low, again providing property tax relief. It gets more complicated with changes to property tax credits, other local government levy growth limits, etc. For schools, the bills cap management fund taxing authority if the ending fund balance exceeds certain thresholds. The bills also prevent school district from having a PPEL (either voted or board) or debt levy if not already in place on July 1, 2025. We have heard that the bill was intended to have a black-out period during the rollback eliminate phase-in, so for four years, but as drafted, the bill would prevent a district without a PPEL or debt levy this July 1 from ever having one.

We are working on improvements to the bills. See last week's RSAI written weekly report for details. Ask legislators to know the impact and proceed cautiously. If you hear from a legislator asking for feedback, reach out to us and we can help you with questions or comments.

So many other important bills are in the works. Watch your inbox for calls to action or end-of-the-week information to see what's still moving.

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:
 - [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.