



April 16, 2015

RSAI Call to Action

Find a Path to Yes: Set Cost per Pupil Now

The Issue: All legislators need to hear you, both parties, both chambers, so the rank and file members can report to their leaders on the Conference Committee that Iowans care about school funding. Continue contacting legislators until this issue is resolved: *gentle persuasion applied relentlessly.*

Joint Education Coalition Lobby Day for Adequate School Funding, April 22, 2015

All of the organizations that are members of the Education Coalition are calling on citizens to help connect with state policy makes to support funding for schools. We need your help:

- House Leaders and the Governor have proposed 1.25% increase in the cost per pupil.
- The Senate started with 4% and made a compromise offer to split the difference at 2.625%.
- Ask your legislators to find a path to yes, work together, and get this done.
- Iowa is currently ranked 35th in the nation in per pupil spending. Our spending rank has dropped nationally over the last decade, the exact time during which other states students have passed our students' achievement in NCAP scores. Student needs are increasing and so is competition across the world for skilled workforce.
- Education is the priority: Funds should be found for education first.

Possible Advocacy Actions: Specific actions (Come to Capitol, Phone Call, Letter to the Editor, Email contact, Tell Others) are all detailed below.

Write a letter and mail it by Monday, April 20: use the talking points above. Mail to Sen. _____, or Rep. _____ State Capitol, 1007 East Grand Ave., Des Moines, Iowa 50319. Find your legislator here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/Legislators/find.aspx>

Come to the Capitol: Be there in person and talk to your legislators or leave them notes about why adequate school funding is important. Deliver letters from others in your community. Make your presence felt. Be there anytime, 8:30 and 5:00, when legislators are most likely to be at work at the Statehouse.

Leave Phone Messages: Call the House and Senate Switchboards and leave a message for your legislators and leadership. Tell the switchboard operator who you are, where you live, ask to either speak with or leave a message for your legislator. Ask for support of adequate school funding, which should be 6%, but no lower than 2.625% for the 2016 fiscal year. Leave your name and number so they can call you back if they want to speak to you. Tell them thank you for listening.

- House Switchboard (515) 281-3221
- Senate Switchboard (515)281-3371
- Don't forget the Governor 515.281.5211. Same drill.

Write a letter to the editor: Send to your local newspaper supporting adequate investment in public education.

RSAI Leadership Group: Brad Breon, Moravia/Seymour, Superintendent, brad.breon@rsaia.org; Gregg Cruickshank, Sidney/South Page, Supt, gregg.cruickshank@rsaia.org; Joel Davis, Coon-Rapids- Bayard, Board Member, joel.davis@rsaia.org; Kevin Fiene, I-35, Superintendent, kevin.fiene@rsaia.org; Lee Ann Grimley, Springville, Board President, leeann.grimley@rsaia.org; Robert Olson, Clarion-Goldfield/Dows, Superintendent, robert.olson@rsaia.org; Brian Rodenberg, Midland, Superintendent, brian.rodenberg@rsaia.org



Email messages: In the subject line, “support adequate school funding” and make sure you thank them for their time, ask for their support of adequate school funding, which should be 6%, but no lower than 2.625% for the 2016 fiscal year. Include one sentence about why education is a priority, or what students will lose if we don’t fund it and schools have to make program and staff reductions.

- Find your legislator’s contact information: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/Legislators/find.aspx>
- Email your legislators: find senator email addresses here <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/senate> and representative email address here <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/house>

Tell others: share this plea with family members, friends, neighbors, coworkers and encourage their action. Use social media, post on your Facebook page, let Iowan’s know what’s at stake.

Additional TALKING POINTS: Thank them for their work, remain respectful, share the impact of 1.25% on your students, ask that they set the cost per pupil for both 2015-16 and 2016-17 this year:

- The REC met on March 19th, set the revenue estimate at 4.3% for FY 2015 and 6.0% for FY 2016. All three members of the REC stated confidence in the state’s economy. With \$750 million estimated in the state’s cash reserve funds according to the Governor’s budget recommendation, the state is in a solid position to prioritize and adequately fund schools.
- Iowa ranks 35th in the nation in per pupil expenditures, \$1,612 below the national average. In the 44-year history of the formula, in only two instances has the per pupil increase been lower than the House recommendation. But even if someone doesn’t like a particular source or ranking, in every case of suggested other sources, Iowa is doing worse when comparing the latest numbers with 1998:
 - NEA ranking per pupil based on enrollment: 1998 rank of 23 compared to 2013 rank of 35
 - NEA ranking based on average daily attendance: 1998 rank of 28 compared to 2013 rank of 33
 - Annie E. Casey Foundation controlling for cost of living: 1998 rank of 11 compared to 2013 rank of 24
- Increased costs run 3-3.5% annually, to keep doing the business of school; heat/utilities, standards expectations, paying staff, increased costs of insurance, transportation, retirement, books, technology and programs.
- Iowa’s economy is strong, state coffers are full. Although we can never be certain about the future, we are certainly well positioned to sustain any significant economic challenge in the next several years. Iowa ranks 9th in the nation in reserve funds on hand, has the 12th highest growth rate in gross domestic product nationally, and ranks 9th in growth of per capita personal income nationwide. We are not in a revenue crisis, just a funding priority crisis with some short-term hiccups legitimately solved with one-time funding, such as surplus.