

2022 Legislative Session begins: The 2022 Legislative Session begins on January 10. April 19th is the 100th day, when legislative per diem (expenses) expire. Since it's an election year, they may try to be done before that date.

The Agenda: Legislative leaders and the Governor have been talking about tax cuts, protection from vaccine mandates and vouchers (using public dollars for private schools). Pay close attention to the RSAI legislative update and video, which will be sent weekly after the first week of Session. RSAI will also summarize the Governor's priorities and her budget (typically announced on Wednesday of the first week of Session).

Budget: In the meantime, reach out to your legislators – share RSAI Position Papers or background on priority issues. Early in the Session, school funding (SSA) will be the focus with a deadline to set the SSA rate by around Valentine's Day (30 days after the release of the Governor's budget). RSAI is requesting 3.75% plus further formula equity. Position Papers with background and talking points are found at <https://www.rsaia.org/2022-legislative-session.html>

Advocacy Priority throughout the Session: Staff and Teacher shortage – send an email or call your legislator once a week during January. How many positions do you have open? How many teachers are working through temporary licensure to get the right certification? How many classrooms have long-term subs? How many subs are you short? Tell a story about a staff member who you may have offered a position but they declined for one that paid more or left school for the private sector. Do you have enough paras? How are you competing with the warehouse or dog food factory down the street?

School Choice: Especially for rural Republicans, talk to them about school choice. Ask them to commit to you that they will not support a plan for vouchers (educational savings accounts). Talking points:

- Iowa already has many school choice options – how many of their constituents are asking for this expansion?
- Allow the 2021 charter school, open enrollment and school tuition organization tax credit expansions a chance to work before taking further drastic steps.
- Vouchers for private school will hurt rural schools. The cost of having the money follow homeschool and private school students (assuming no increase in participation for either group) is just shy of \$400 million. Even if phased in over time, this cost reflected in the education budget will make it difficult, if not impossible, for the state to adequately fund public schools. Our rural schools are most in need of adequate funding. Also, if there is a private school in your area, a diversion of just a few students might mean the loss of a program or teacher for the community public school.
- Private schools and homeschool have no public accountability. The use of public dollars demands some level of expenditure transparency and oversight. Unlike other states with vouchers (Ohio, for example), Iowa private schools are not required to accept all applicants, give the state test, and be included in the state report card. Iowa homeschools require even less.

Resources: Check out the RSAI website for Position Papers, weekly updates and advocacy supports before and during the 2022 Session. Contact Dave Daughton or Margaret Buckton with any requests for assistance or specific advocacy responses to your legislators. See www.rsaia.org for contact information and advocacy supports. Happy New Year!