



Action Line

IASB Legislative Activity

Race to the Top

This week, the Capitol saw an immense amount of action on education bills, primarily to meet federal Race to the Top deadlines. The Legislature finished work on the bill needed to implement the Race to the Top grant today. See the description below for SF 2033. In short, the language passed, without the amendment we supported, and was headed to the Governor for his signature this afternoon. The grant application will be filed Saturday, Jan. 16, with the U.S. Department of Education.

Earlier this week on Thursday, Jan. 13, IASB sent a note to school districts recommending they not submit their Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs), due to concerns about the statutory language that would require low-performing school districts to enter into collective bargaining regarding interventions. As of this morning, 220 MOUs were submitted representing approximately 49 percent of the students in the state. We are already receiving inquiries from school districts wanting to know how to withdraw their MOUs. We are currently working with the Iowa Department of Education to develop a process for boards to follow. We will keep you posted on progress on that discussion. To all of you who helped contact legislators on this bill, we thank you. We will continue to discuss what options we have to fight the collective bargaining piece, and will keep you updated.

Regional Lobby Days

IASB is hosting three Regional Lobby Days throughout the legislative session this year, instead of our annual Legislative Conference, in order to have a more strategic and consistent presence at the Capitol. We will begin each day with a briefing on the issues, and will then visit the Capitol to meet with legislators. This is an incredibly powerful opportunity for you to build relationships with your legislators

and tell your district's story, so lawmakers understand the implications of their actions. IASB members are invited to attend any day, but we have split the state up by region as shown below in hopes of having a presence each of these three months.

Jan. 19 - AEA 267, Prairie Lakes (AEA 8), Mississippi Bend (AEA 9)

Feb. 16 - Keystone (AEA 1), Great Prairie, Northwest

March 9 - Grant Wood (AEA 10), Heartland (AEA 11), Loess Hills (AEA 13), Green Valley (AEA 14)

This opportunity is free of charge but we do ask people to register. More information is available online at <http://www.iasb.org/EventsTraining.aspx?id=8410>.

Bill Tracker

Bills Headed to the Governor

SF 2033 – Race to the Top by Education

This bill implements the provisions needed for Iowa to be eligible for the Race to the Top funds. Two-thirds of the bill are basically noncontroversial – raising the cap on charter schools and implementation of Innovation Zones. One provision, however, regarding interventions for the lowest-performing schools is controversial and IASB opposes it. The grant outlines four interventions that the lowest-performing schools must use. All of the interventions require some level of staff turnover or building restructuring, including building closure. The final bill has language that requires boards to negotiate the selection of the intervention strategy as well as the implementation of the selected interventions. IASB believes those decisions are, and should remain, under the authority of school boards. Rep. Kevin Koester (R – Ankeny) sponsored an amendment to pull the language but it was defeated on a mostly partisan vote 52-47. IASB adamantly opposed the

one provision but monitored the bill as a whole. The bill is on its way to the governor.

SF 2045, SF 2046 - FY 2012 Allowable Growth by Education

IASB was successful in convincing the Legislature to delay setting the FY 2012 allowable growth rate. Iowa law requires this rate to be set within 30 days of the governor's budget submission. SF 2045 and SF 2046 were approved unanimously by both chambers and now go to the Governor for his signature - they delay state aid and categorical funding. IASB supported the bills.

Bills on the Move

HF 2030 - Cash Reserves by Education

Two identical bills that would direct the School Budget Review Committee to more carefully examine and take action against districts with excessive cash reserves made their way through the legislative process this week. The governor has made it a priority to push schools to use cash reserves rather than raise property taxes. HF 2030 would require the SBRC to adopt rules to consider limits on schools that have an excessive amount of unexpended fund balance. The bill, as amended by the House, would restrict this authority to the unobligated and undesignated portion of a school district's ending fund balance. The SBRC would have the authority to request an appearance by a district with "excessive" cash reserves and could restrict the district's ability to levy for additional cash reserves until that balance is spent down. According to the Iowa Department of Education, the initial threshold for consideration will be anything above two months worth of undesignated and unreserved balances. The bill also expands the membership on the SBRC by one individual and changes the Director of the Department of Education to an ex-officio member. HF 2030 passed the House 85-8. The Senate will consider the bill next week. IASB expressed concerns about limiting the ability of districts to manage their finances. IASB is monitoring the bill.

HF 2001 – Use of Management Levy for Health Benefits by Frevert (D), et al.

This bill would allow school districts to levy for health benefits in the management fund. Unlike other management fund expenditures, however, this expenditure would require boards to take the issue to a vote of the people where it would need to pass by a simple majority. The ability to use the management fund for health benefits is at the sole discretion of the

board and would not be subject to arbitration. IASB has concerns about the bill because it widens the inequity between schools that can pass additional levies and those who cannot. The fiscal impact is potentially as high as a \$400 million increase in property taxes, according to the Legislative Services Agency. The bill is in the House Education Committee.

Legislative Issues Webinars

IASB held two legislative issues webinars this week to build understanding about legislative issues we expect to arise this session. The PowerPoint presentation and a video of legislative leaders is available online; a recording will be available soon. Visit www.ia-sb.org.

CapitolCast

We will continue the popular CapitolCast this year, making short, 5-minute video clips available at least every other week. Please feel free to use these clips as a way to stay updated yourself, or show them at the board table to keep your community in the loop on advocacy efforts. This week's CapitolCast is available at <http://www.ia-sb.org/LegislativeAdvocacy.aspx?id=6380>.

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Advocacy Resources Online!

Keep up with the latest information online at www.ia-sb.org. Check out the latest in the lower right corner of the home page, under the Legislative Advocacy Center, or click on the Legislative Advocacy bar on the left side of the screen to go to a full page of resources. The following are available:

2010 Legislative Platform: View the platform, as set by the Delegate Assembly, which includes IASB's Beliefs, Resolutions, Position Statements and the one priority identified for this year: allowable growth.

2010 Legislative Talking Points: These talking points have been compiled by IASB staff to assist members in preparing for discussions with lawmakers and others. They cover not only our priority of allowable growth this year, but other education issues expected to arise at the Legislature this session, including cash reserves, protection of the Statewide Penny, IPERS, unfunded mandates, shifting the AEAs to the DE, and restructuring issues.

Finding Your Legislator: Use our directory to find the legislators that represent your school district, as well as their contact information.

Legislative Advocacy Toolkit: This kit offers everything from the basics of how the Legislature works to tips on building coalitions, working with the media and more. It includes informational materials as well as activities that help school districts build their own legislative advocacy action plans. You'll find it on the Legislative Advocacy page of the IASB Web site, on the right-hand side of the page.