

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD Newsbulletin

May 2009 / Issue No. 685

State updates stimulus funds delivery plan

A total of \$1.4 billion of initial payments of federal stimulus dollars began flowing to local educational agencies in Illinois in late April as part of a nationwide effort to stave off mass layoffs and program cuts stemming from the national recession and worsening state budget shortfalls. Illinois was among the first three states getting the funds and eventually expects to receive as much as \$3.1 billion in federal aid.

According to Gov. Patrick Quinn, Illinois plans to use over \$1 billion of that money in Fiscal Year 2009 to pay general education expenses and avoid state funding cuts for schools. The state will use the remaining funds in Fiscal Year 2010.

“With help from the General Assembly, the state of Illinois is acting quickly to take advantage of every federal recovery dollar available to us,” said Gov. Pat Quinn.

As mentioned, Illinois’ share of the stimulus funds for education now is expected to total about \$3.1 billion. A billion dollars worth of that will go to schools automatically according to current funding formulas for Title I (earmarked funds for disadvantaged students), special educa-



The federal stimulus package contains funds for the Qualified Zone Academy Bond program, for use in modernizing and repairing schools.

tion and other categorical programs.

The U.S. Department of Education continues to refine its guidelines for distributing the \$100 billion earmarked for education nationally in the \$787 billion American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). Many of the automatically funded programs getting formula money through the ARRA will have to make legislative, business, and even management information system changes in order to comply with federal guidelines.

In a recent weekly message from State Superintendent Christopher Koch, he stated, “The federal stimulus package is a complicated piece of legislation that has had, and will continue to have, many unintended consequences as we all work through it.”

“There is a big misconception about this stimulus money. This money cannot supplant and it must be able to sustain,” Koch said.

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ISBE to recruit, support future agriculture teachers

ISBE announced on April 21 that \$350,000 in grant money has been awarded to several universities and community colleges to help recruit and retain future high school agriculture teachers.

“Agriculture is the backbone of industry in Illinois. Having qualified instructors specialize in this field is essential to our standing in the world marketplace,” said State Superintendent Christopher A. Koch.

The “Growing Agriculture Science Teachers” incentive grants can help community colleges and universities recruit agriculture science teacher candidates, enrich their preparation and offer professional development during their first five years of service. Plans for the grants include collaboration between high schools and Illinois universities and community colleges where students can gain experiences through paid internships or other career-related activities to become ag teachers.

High school students considering a career in agricultural education should visit the new website, “Inspiring Minds to Grow,” at <http://www.teachag.net>.

Segregation of drivers' ed fees and revenue required

A recent state law, Public Act 94-426, requires that all driver education fees and state reimbursements for drivers' education must be deposited into the receiving school district's drivers' education fund. In addition, it must be deposited as a separate line-item budget entry.

The money in the district's driver education fund can only be used for the funding of a high school driver education program approved by the Illinois State Board of Education that uses instructors certified by the ISBE.

ISBE document answers common questions about General State Aid

A revised version of the document General State Aid – Frequently Asked Questions can be accessed at: http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/gsa_faq.pdf.

This Web publication from the state education agency contains important information to accurately report attendance for the General State Aid claim and includes topics pertaining to full and part-time attendance, home/hospital instruction, school calendar, alternative schools, special education as well as other related attendance issues.

Key excerpts:

Q: Can attendance be claimed for a homeless student? Is residency an issue?

A: Yes. The district can claim attendance for General State Aid.

Homeless pupils include, but are not limited to, children or youth sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (commonly referred to as being “doubled up”) and pupils who are otherwise not residing in a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. A homeless pupil must be immediately enrolled in any of the following:

- (a) the school in which he or she was enrolled when permanently housed (also known as the “school of origin”);
- (b) the school in which he or she was last enrolled; or
- (c) any public school that a non-homeless student, living in the same vicinity as the homeless student, would be eligible to attend.

There is no specific time limit on how long a student can be considered homeless. Whether a student meets the definition of being homeless depends on their living situation and individual circumstances. As already noted, if a student is (or that student or his or her parent or

guardian claim the student is) homeless, districts must immediately enroll the pupil and also arrange for transportation and other services as appropriate.

If a district disputes that a student is homeless, the district must not engage in residency proceedings, but in dispute resolution procedures as dictated by McKinney-Vento and the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act. The Illinois State Board of Education Homelessness Policy is available online at: <http://www.isbe.net/homeless/pdf/policy.pdf>.

Q: If a parent enrolls a student but he or she does not attend the first few days of school, when can the school begin to claim attendance?

A: General State Aid is calculated on actual attendance, not enrollment...[the] student cannot be claimed until he or she is in attendance.

Questions regarding this document or the General State Aid claim can be directed to Jim Mathes, Funding & Disbursements, at 217/782-5256 or by e-mail at jmathes@isbe.net.

Illinois
SCHOOL BOARD
Newsbulletin

**Illinois Association
of School Boards**

This newsletter is published monthly by the Illinois Association of School Boards for member boards of education and their superintendents. The Illinois Association of School Boards, an Illinois not-for-profit corporation, is a voluntary association of local boards of education and is not affiliated with any branch of government.

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**ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS**

Legislation would add CPI floor in tax cap counties

Two bills now stalled in the state legislature would create a CPI “floor” for calculating the extension limitation of two percent under the state’s PTELL (tax cap) law. There is no lower limit now in place to protect school districts against a near zeroing-out of growth in their local property tax revenue, and the matter is pressing this year, school leaders say. That’s because the CPI has fallen below the two percent level, limiting property tax revenue available in tax cap counties.

Both of the key bills on the subject, one in the Senate and one in the House, fell short of adoption when called for a vote in their respective houses of origin. The push to provide property tax cap relief is not dead for this session of the legislature, according to Ben Schwarm, associate executive director of IASB’s Advocacy/Governmental Relations department.

The two pieces of legislation that recently stalled are: **SB 2126** (Viverito, D-Burbank) and **HB 2502** (Turner, D-Chicago). Both bills would create a Consumer Price Index (CPI) “floor”

for calculating the extension limitation under the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL). The bills provide that the extension limitation under PTELL may be no less than 2 percent, even if the CPI dips well below this level, as it has currently.

Advocates said the legislation is badly needed because schools are facing skyrocketing costs and a growth factor of far less than one percent. CPI for next year’s extension limitation will only be 0.1 percent, which will severely limit the ability of school leaders to meet the costs of providing public education in their districts. “The average CPI from 1994-2009 has been 2.82 percent and in no year before 2009 has the figure dipped below 1.6 percent,” Schwarm said.

School districts incur additional costs to operate their schools just in opening the building doors each year, he suggests. And automatic cost increases of two to four percent annually occur in teacher salary schedules; retirement benefit costs increase from eight to 15 percent yearly; and increas-

es in health care costs can range from six to eight percent, all causing school districts to look to local resources to meet obligations.

“In addition, under-funded mandated programs such as special education, new unfunded mandates passed on by the state and federal governments, and increasing transportation costs further exacerbate school district budget problems,” according to Schwarm

Because the state provides less than 40 percent of the statewide cost to fund public schools, school districts must rely on local property taxes for revenue. These legislative proposals will give school districts much needed stability to meet the costs of providing safe facilities and effective educational programs to students.

For more information about legislative progress of various bills, see reports from the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance. The reports are available online at: <http://www.iasb.com/govrel/alrmenu.cfm>.

2009 supplements sent to those who bought 2008 School Code

The Illinois Association of School Boards has received shipment of the 2009 Illinois School Code Supplement.

Copies of the supplement will automatically be mailed to school districts and others who previously purchased copies of the 2008 School Code. There is no need to place additional orders.

Also, from now until the 2010 Code becomes available next year, all new sales of the School Code will include both the 2008 code and the 2009 supplement.

The 2009 supplement includes an updated CD ROM version of the complete School Code that is current through all of the 2008 legislative ses-

sion. The CD also includes annotations with case law and other references, all State Board of Education rules and the text of court cases cited in the annotations. The CD is equipped with the Folio Views search engine for easy searching, saving and printing on any personal computer equipped with Microsoft Windows. Note: the CD will not run on Apple or other operating systems.

The 2008-2009 School Code Service also carries a large number of additional statutes pertinent to the public schools, including selected election laws and pension laws, Educational Labor Relations Act, Open Meetings Act, Freedom of Information Act, Economic Disclosure Sec-

tion of the Governmental Ethics Act, Truth in Taxation Act, Local Records Act, Personnel Record Review Act, Prevailing Wage Act, Emancipation of Mature Minors Act, Local Government and Governmental Employees Tort Immunity Act, Gift Ban Act, pertinent sections from the Juvenile Court Act, School Visitation Rights Act, and a complete index.

The 2008-2009 School Code Service may be obtained from IASB for \$50 each (\$40 for IASB Members) plus \$5 per order for shipping.

For more information or to place orders, call or write: IASB Publications, 2921 Baker Drive, Springfield, IL 62703; 217/528-9688, extension 1108. Or fax orders to 217/528-2831.

School leaders from 405 Illinois districts attend NSBA

69th yearly conference provides board training

Hundreds of Illinois school districts participated in the 69th annual conference of the National School Boards Association in San Diego.

The event, which was held April 3-7 at the San Diego Convention Center, drew 5,754 paid registrations, including representatives from 405 Illinois districts. This year's conference featured more than 200 sessions and workshops, offered in topical program tracks, including accountability, alignment, climate, collaboration, and community engagement.

Thousands attended four general sessions, featuring renowned speakers: U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, author Toni Morrison, actress Julie Andrews, and Central Asia Institute co-founder Greg Mortenson.

Duncan, who previously was the CEO of Chicago Public Schools, challenged school leaders to find ways to reform public education. He called the availability of \$100 million in federal stimulus dollars the "perfect storm for reform."

Duncan also praised his former boss, board member Tariq Butt, who is also on the IASB board of directors, for his "exceptional education leadership" in the **CPS 299** district.

The first general session, which also introduced the presidents of the state school board associations, including IASB President Mark C. Metzger of **Indian Prairie CUSD 204**, also featured an address by NSBA Executive Director Anne L. Bryant. She introduced a fifth grader, Dalton Sherman, from Dallas, Texas, who also challenged school leaders to believe in him and the potential for all children. "One day, we'll be in charge of this world, so you better not give up on us," he quipped to applause.

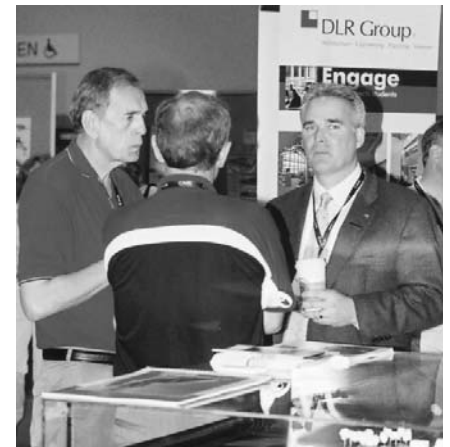
Bryant also publicly thanked local board members, including Joanne Schaeffer of **Lyons Elementary SD**



Board members and guests enjoy themselves at the Illinois reception at the NSBA conference in San Diego.



Kenneth Arndt, superintendent, **CUSD 300, Carpentersville**, answers a question at a panel session.



Several IASB Service Associates, including DLR Group, Inc., of Chicago, exhibited at NSBA.



Dr. Michael Johnson, executive director, addresses attendees at the IASB Board/staff dinner.

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103, for helping NSBA to help lobby for extra funding from Congress.

Several Illinois school districts made panel presentations during the conference, as many Illinois school board members, superintendents, education officials and their guests gathered to learn from one another and from experts in schooling. The Illinois school districts presenting their topics and the school leaders and staff who served as moderators and panelists, included:

Community Unit School District 300, *The New Democracy: School Districts Go Online*; Moderator: Kenneth Arndt, superintendent; Presenters: Allison Smith, communications supervisor; Joe Stevens, board president; John Ryan, board member

Northbrook School District 27, *Successful Public Engagement: Working with Stakeholders to Achieve a Positive Outcome on a Tough Decision*; Moderator: David Kroeze, superintendent; Presenters: Sally Lane, board member; Jennifer Warner, board member

Northbrook School District 27, *What Every Board Should Know About Developing a Research-Based Literacy Curriculum*; Moderator: Katharine Olson, assistant superintendent for curriculum, instruction, and assessment; Presenters: Jennifer Warner, board member; Helene Spak, curriculum coordinator

Steger School District 194, *No Excuses: Learning for All!*; Presenter: Lisa Harrod, assistant superintendent

Steger School District 194, *Response to Intervention....Sweeping the Nation*; Moderator: Lisa Harrod, assistant superintendent; Presenter: Jill Raymond, board secretary

Township High School District 214, *Increasing Student Success and Reducing Failures Through a Collaborative Goal-Setting Process*; Moderator: David Schuler, superintendent; Presenters: Alva Kreutzer, board mem-



Nesa Brauer, IASB Consultant for Board Development, was among the NSBA training session presenters in San Diego.

ber; Laz Lopez, principal; William Dussling, board member

Woodstock Community Unit School District 200, *Boundary Changes, Buildings and Beyond: A Multipurpose Model for Successful Community Engagement*; Moderator: Barbara Banker, director of community services; Presenters: Ellyn Wrzeski, superintendent; Paul Meyer, board president; Barbara Banker, director of community services

More than 300 firms exhibited at this year's conference, including several firms that also hold membership as IASB Service Associates.

The Exhibition of School Architecture also saw Illinois participants, including: Wight & Company, for Hawthorne Elementary School, **Elmhurst CUSD 205**, and for Naperville Early Childhood Center, **Naperville CUSD 203**; ARCON Associates, Inc., for Conant High School, **Township HSD 211**; and Legat Architects, Inc., for Wauconda High School, **Wauconda CUSD 118**.

Illinois was also represented at the NSBA Delegate Assembly. Delegates included Joe Alesandrini, **Pekin CHSD 303**; Marie Slater, **Wheaton Warrenville CUSD 200**; Carlyne Brooks, **West Richland CUSD 2**, and Tariq Butt, **Chicago 299**. Mark C. Metzger, **Indian Prairie CUSD 204**, was

also appointed to a full term as a NSBA director, representing the Central Region. C.H. "Sonny" Savoie of Louisiana is the new NSBA President.

Delegates passed 22 resolutions, including one that reaffirmed NSBA's position on national standards.

During the conference, IASB also learned that it was one of three state school board associations to be awarded a grant to participate in a project that helps school boards use data for decision making. Two Illinois districts, **East St. Louis SD 189** and **Lindop SD 92**, will also participate.

IASB staff also participated in many of the panels, workshops and other conference events. Among those presenting or facilitating were: Barbara B. Toney, Anna Lovern, Laurel DiPrima, John Cassel, Jeffrey Cohn, Angie Peifer, Nesa Brauer, Sandra Kwasa, Steve Clark, and Debra Larson. Other staff were involved in various conference activities, such as the executive job fair and law seminars. The entire staff and IASB officers also hosted a reception for all Illinois school board members and guests on Friday night.

The next annual NSBA conference is scheduled for April 10-13, 2010, in Chicago. To learn more about this year's event, visit NSBA's conference website at: <http://www.nsba.org/conference/>.



Illinois school superintendents learned helpful information about the federal economic stimulus package for schools when they packed conference rooms at the yearly IASA conference in Springfield in mid April.

IASA confab attendees learn ropes on U.S. stimulus funds

Speaker doubts impact of test scores on future

Hungry for information about the arrival of federal dollars for schools, Illinois superintendents packed a room at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Springfield in the middle of April to get the most current details from an Illinois State Board of Education panel.

The panel was just one of the offerings over three days during the 44th Annual Conference of the Illinois Association of School Administrators.

Many school administrators left the room still confused by the timetable for allocation of the money and the paperwork they will need to complete to receive their portion of the Federal Stimulus Funds and the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA). Some of the funds will come in the form of additional payments under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), some will be Title I and still others will be under the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act. All will require separate budget codes and tracking.

Tim Imler, ISBE division administrator for funding and disbursement, said districts should check the ISBE website to get guidelines on how the money can be used. He also cautioned superintendents that the amounts they see on the Department of Education website “may not necessarily

be right. The funds need to go through lots of iterations before we have an actual amount,” Imler said.

Districts may be able to access a portion of their funds yet this fiscal year if they file a letter of intent in April, receive a paper application and get it returned in time. Those who wait to access funds during the 2010 and 2011 fiscal years will be able to use an electronic application. All of the money must be spent by September 30, 2011.

Other event highlights included:

- Yong Zhao, a professor at Michigan State University and founding director of the Center for Teaching and Technology, said some achievement gaps may not matter. He pointed out gaps identified over the past 50 years have not caused serious problems and that the U.S. still leads the rest of the world by 30 to 50 years in science and technology. In fact, those countries identified with high test scores in the past actually show worse economic profiles over the years. “The goal of education is not to produce high test scores,” Zhao said. What the U.S. needs to figure out is what value the country can add to make our engineering students worth five times more in salary than an engineering student from China or India.
- Wendy D. Puriefoy, president of the nation’s largest network of community-based public school reform

organizations, said the U.S. can’t remake itself as a country if we don’t remake our schools. Arrival of federal stimulus dollars provides an excellent opportunity for districts to engage their communities to talk about how the money will be used and challenges the district faces in complying with guidelines. “We can’t afford the message that schools got all this money and it didn’t make a difference,” Puriefoy said.

- Monte Ladner, a retired physician who developed the Fitness Rocks podcast three years ago, told superintendents that talk about healthy lifestyles needs to start early in schools. The medical community has put out a consistent message since the 1950s, he said, that maintaining a healthy weight, exercising, eating at least five fruits and vegetables a day and quitting smoking will lower risk for chronic diseases like diabetes and hypertension.

In other business, IASA honored Mark Friedman, superintendent at **Libertyville SD 70**, as the 2009 Illinois Superintendent of the Year. Friedman, who will retire after this school year, has been superintendent for the K-8 district since 1990.

William H. Phillips, currently an associate professor of educational leadership at the University of Illinois at Springfield, was honored as the 2009 recipient of the Van Miller Distinguished Practitioner Scholar Award.

IASB mails out housing forms for Joint Annual Conference in Chicago

Hotels assigned on first received, first-served basis

The 2009 Joint Annual Conference will be headquartered at the Hyatt Regency Chicago and Sheraton Chicago hotels. (Details about all conference hotels are listed in the accompanying table at right.) This year's event will be the 95th annual conference of IASB and the 77th joint annual conference with IASA and Illinois ASBO.

Conference packets, including information about housing, will be mailed to districts on June 8.

To obtain housing, both the completed registration and housing form with a check or credit card to cover the registration fee (\$340 per registrant) and the nonrefundable \$150 per room hotel deposit fee for each individual listed on each of these forms must be forwarded to IASB Meetings Management, 2921 Baker Drive, Springfield, Illinois 62703. Housing will not be processed without the required fees/deposits and conference registration is a requirement for housing placement.

Housing is assigned daily on a first received, first assigned basis to the hotel indicated on the housing form as the hotel of choice until the room block at the hotel is filled.

When the housing is assigned, a copy of the housing form with the hotel assignment circled and the assignment date indicated, along with the district registration receipt, is mailed to the district superintendent.

When the 1st choice hotel is no longer available, a copy of the housing form, listing the alternate choice hotel which has been assigned for placement and the assignment date, is faxed to the district superintendent.

If the assigned hotel is not acceptable, a fax stating rejection of the hotel must be received by IASB no later than five working days from the assignment

Hotel	Total Room Block
Hyatt	1,700
Sheraton Chicago Hotel and Towers	1,000
Doubletree	250
Embassy Suites	300
Fairmont Hotel	448
Intercontinental Hotel	300
Palmer House	500
Marriott Chicago	600
Swissotel	400
Westin Chicago River North	200
Total Conference Guestrooms Available for Placement	5,698

date. If the hotel is rejected within the allotted five working days, IASB will return the housing deposit and the district must secure its own housing. If the alternate hotel is not rejected within the five working day timeline, the housing and nonrefundable deposit will be forwarded to the alternate hotel for entry and email confirmation directly to the district superintendent.

Once the housing form is forwarded to the assigned hotel for placement, there is no refund of the housing deposit by the hotel for cancelled rooms. The Hyatt Regency and the Sheraton Hotel and Towers require a Friday/Saturday night stay. If a room at these hotels is cancelled, the district will be billed for a two-night stay, less the \$150 deposit.

Most hotels require a fee when a guestroom is vacated prior to the originally-scheduled departure date. To avoid this fee, all departure date changes must be made with the placement hotel prior to the arrival date.

Once IASB has forwarded the housing form to the placement hotel all further communication regarding the placed guestrooms is to be directed to the placement hotel.

Questions concerning registration procedures for this year's conference should be directed to IASB Meetings Management at ext. 1115 or 1102; the fax number is 217/241-2144.



Nominations sought for Association officers

The nominating committee of the Illinois Association of School Boards is currently seeking candidates for the offices of president and vice president of IASB.

The following criteria will be used by the committee in considering nominees:

- leadership experience and general participation in IASB activities
- leadership experience on the local school board
- involvement with other education-related associations or organizations
- other leadership experiences
- special talent or interests of benefit to the Association now

Nominating forms are due to be submitted by early August and candidates will be interviewed that month. A slate of candidates will be presented to the Delegate Assembly meeting in November.

To request necessary forms, interested candidates should write: IASB, 2921 Baker Drive, Springfield, IL 62703, or call IASB at 217/528-9688 or 630/629-3776, at ext. 1102.

DuPage vacancy filled after director retires

A vacancy was recently filled on IASB's Board of Directors after one opened in April due to a member's retirement. Specifically, Rosemary Swanson has been appointed interim director for the DuPage Division, filling a post previously held by Cindi Dahl.

Swanson is vice president of the Wheaton **Warrenville CUSD 200** Board of Education. Dahl had chosen not to run again in the April election for a seat on the **Darien District 61** Board of Education. Dahl had served on her local board for 15 years and was an IASB director for four years.

Longer not always better in collective bargaining agreements

Editor's note: This law column comes from Fred B. Lifton, a school attorney who teaches labor law at John Marshall Law School in Chicago. Fred Lifton's practice focuses on all aspects of labor relations and employment law, and in many areas of education law.

By Fred B. Lifton

Over a span of almost 40 years in negotiating collective bargaining agreements for school boards, I have (not surprisingly) witnessed new issues arising and a number of shifts of position by both sides.

As an example, few school boards any longer go to the mat on the issue of binding grievance procedure, and—hopefully— they concentrate more on the definition of grievance and the selection and authority of the arbitrator.

Another change has come in the typical length of the contract. Many boards give relatively high priority to achieving as long an agreement as they can. I recently encountered a board member in a district where I once bargained, but which is now handling negotiations on their own. She proudly told me they had recently concluded a ten-year agreement.

The financial numbers in this whopper of a long-term contract were all fixed. In relation to the then existing cost-of-living, the board did reasonably well, and of course achieved the stability it was seeking. However—and the board member seemed troubled by my inquiring—I heard there were no protections for either side if there were to be a drastic swing in the economy (which at that point in time had not occurred for quite awhile).

Unfortunately, in recent months we have seen cataclysmic economic change.

In districts with fixed dollar and/or percentage salary/fringe increases with numbers well above the 0.1% CPI of 2008, the problem is painfully obvious. Should such a board now go to its union and request a voluntary adjustment? What is the board willing to give to accomplish such?

Remember that a give-away of power in the language is almost always more costly in the long run than giving money.

In some districts which have lengthy contracts tied to some degree to the cost-of-living, some board members may see a bonanza of sorts. But the picture may not really be that simple.

Where the proverbial shoe is on the other foot - *i.e.*, where the union settled on a number related to CPI, should the board agree to open the contract (as some unions have requested)? To do so is very likely to engender public displeasure, and to decline or sour even the best of relationships between management and the union. (By the way, there is no simple or universal answer to this conundrum.)

All of this points to the potential danger of long-term agreements. When I first started to do school bargaining in 1970, one-year contracts were not at all unusual. Both sides were typically new to the bargaining process and just learning the ropes. A two or three-year deal really made the news. In not too long, the environment shifted so that a three-year contract was more typical than not. (Part of the reason this occurred may have been the prevalence of three-years duration in much of the private sectors, related to provisions in the federal law which governs there.)

By the 1990's, three years was often the shortest contract being nego-

tiated. Part of this flowed from the growing sophistication of the parties in negotiating and understanding collective bargaining agreement, and some from a desire to postpone coming back to the negotiation's table. (Very understandably, neither board members nor administrators were anxious to deal with negotiations more often than absolutely necessary.)

Two decades ago the longest contract I bargained was for six years. This may have been the first such contract in the state. It was motivated by the parties having come off of a quite nasty strike. (Yes, occasionally a strike can be relatively non-contentious, but don't count on it). We softened the risks of this lengthy commitment by tying out-year settlement to a complicated formula related to CPI and actual district income, and by setting an interim date when either side could terminate the agreement and thus compel a return to the table. (By the way, the agreement ended up running the full six years.)

So, is a longer contract better? Answer: Compared to what? More seriously, the answer is "yes," but only if controls are included to prevent it from becoming too one-sided in favor of one of the parties. (It doesn't matter which one.) The board's ability to pay, the CPI, the impact on hiring and retirement; other settlements, etc. may need to be addressed as well. Creativity is a necessary element.

TRS pension chief quits amid scandal

The executive director of the Teachers' Retirement System of Illinois, Jon Bauman, resigned on April 8 just a week after state pension reforms called for him to leave the fund by July 1.

Bauman's resignation was effective immediately, according to TRS. Chief investment officer Stan Rupnik will serve as interim executive director.

The departure is seen as part of sweeping ethics reform legislation passed on April 2 that removes the

board members of all retirement systems in the state that were appointed by former governor Rod Blagojevich.

Illinois Education Association President Ken Swanson said in a written statement just before the resignation that: "Mr. Bauman's failure to promptly notify law enforcement authorities of allegations of wrongdoing badly damaged the credibility of TRS with Gov. Pat Quinn and legislative leaders, contributing to last week's legislative action."

NEWS HEADLINES

Evergreen Park (April 14, *SouthtownStar*) In the wake of a female softball pitcher suffering a concussion and broken bones after being struck in the head, Evergreen Park High School and a Lincoln-Way traveling team have mandated that all female pitchers will wear face masks. The Illinois High School Association is waiting for direction from the National Federation of State High School Associations before making any statewide rules on the matter.

Geneseo (April 16, *Quad-Cities Online*) A \$750,000 geothermal system should be completed by the end of July at Geneseo's Millikin Elementary School. Work on the project began on March 9 and should be completed before the next school year. A system of underground pipes will be used to circulate liquid to and from the school, cooling or heating the building as the season requires. It is estimated it will take six or seven years to pay back the difference in cost of this over a conventional HVAC system.

Grayslake (April 17, *The Daily Herald*) Grayslake CCSD 46 officials want to make significant cuts in district energy costs, and the board is weighing an energy audit to help. District 46 is not alone in trying to cut its electricity tab. School districts based in the Mundelein area, Hanover Park and Carpentersville are among those looking at wind turbines and other ways to slice expenses. Introducing the use of solar power or wind energy is among the possibilities at District 46, depending on what a professional energy audit finds.

Huntley (April 9, *The Daily Herald*) A former Huntley Unit District 158 bus driver must pay a \$1,500 fine for suddenly braking and sending dozens of students flying from their seats after they became too rowdy. The former driver was found guilty in January of reckless conduct and endangering the life or health of a

child in connection with the April 30 incident in an elementary school parking lot. Nineteen of the 54 students on the bus suffered minor injuries, according to police.

Joliet (April 16, *Chicago Tribune*) A Joliet elementary school teacher who was barred from wearing a disposable respiratory mask on campus has returned to the classroom after reaching an agreement with school district officials. The teacher, who suffers from severe allergies, had been on leave from school since February, when she filed a complaint with the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission after school officials told her she could not wear the mask on school grounds. She does not wear it while teaching, but frequently has it on while walking to and from classrooms.

Joliet (May 1, *Chicago Southtown Star*) After a lottery to break a three-way tie in the April 7 election, the new Union School District 81 board members were seated on April 29. This year's election for the four seats up for election was a bit bizarre. Not one of the four incumbents sought re-election, and not one resident petitioned to be a candidate. So seven residents all decided to run as write-ins for the three four-year terms. Will County Clerk Nancy Schultz Voots held a lottery recently to break the tie, and the lottery eliminated one name from the list of winners. But this still leaves a vacant two-year seat.

Plainfield (April 17, *The Herald News*) Plainfield CCSD 202 officials have hired a finance specialist to tackle the \$7 million deficit that brought on the laying off of more than 80 teachers and school employees in March. The school board announced that John Prince, who is now the chief finance officer with the School District U-46, Elgin, will be the assistant superintendent for business operations.

Rockford (April 10, *Rockford*

Register Star) Principal Jill Davis and three staff members in Rockford District 205 are being credited with saving the life of a seventh-grader when he collapsed and stopped breathing during the first day of track practice on April 9. The students were racing up the school's front drive when Thomas fell to the pavement. Davis, the first to respond, began CPR after she determined that Thomas wasn't breathing and had no pulse.

Statewide (April 16, *Chicago Tribune*) A lawsuit challenging the school funding system in Illinois, and alleging it discriminates against black and Hispanic students, may continue, a Cook County judge ruled on April 16. Judge S. Martin Agran found there was enough evidence to proceed. The Chicago Urban League and its allies sued the state and the Illinois State Board of Education in August. This is the first lawsuit that alleges the funding disparities violate the civil rights of minority students under the state's 2003 civil rights law. "This is important and historic because we passed a milestone no other lawsuit in Illinois has been able to pass," said Cheryle Jackson, the Urban League's president and chief executive officer.

Statewide (April 21, *Chicago Southtown Star*) "The common misconception that it is best to separate multiples in school can, in reality, cause long-term damage to children," according to letter writers Dan Bailey and Shari Schmidt, Illinois Twins Law committee co-chairs. They said the Illinois Twins Law committee is working for a change to allow parents input in the placement of their children. "Most of the studies conclude that a flexible policy, in which parents and educators work together, is in the best interests of the children," according to Bailey and Schmidt. Other states, from Massachusetts to Florida to Minnesota, have enacted similar legislation.

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As these are one-time funds, he added, ARRA Title 1, Part A funds should be directed toward short-term investments rather than expenditures that the school district may not be able to sustain once the recovery funds are expended. According to Koch, some possible uses of the funds include:

- Establishing a system for identifying and training highly effective teachers to serve as instructional leaders in Title 1 school wide programs and modifying the school schedule to allow for collaboration among the instructional staff.
- Establishing intensive, year-long teacher training for all teachers and the principal in a Title 1 elementary school in corrective action or restructuring status in order to train teachers to use a new reading curriculum that aggressively works on improving students' oral language skills and vocabulary or, in some other way, builds teachers' capacity to address academic achievement problems.
- Strengthening and expanding early childhood education by providing resources to align a district-wide Title 1 Pre-K program with state early learning standard and state content standards for grades K-3 and, if there is a plan for sustainability beyond 2010-11, expanding high-quality Title 1 Pre-K programs to larger numbers of young children.
- Providing new opportunities for Title 1 school wide programs for secondary school students to use high-quality, online courseware as supplemental learning materials for meeting mathematics and science requirements.
- Providing professional development to teachers in Title 1 targeted assistance programs on the use of data to inform and improve instruction for Title 1 eligible students.
- Using reading or mathematics coaches to provide professional development to teachers in Title 1 targeted

assistance programs; and establishing or expanding fiscally sustainable extended learning opportunities for Title 1 eligible students in targeted assistance programs, including activities provided before school, after school, during the summer, or over an extended school year.

School districts are being cautious and making cuts because the revenue stream is not coming in as projected. General State Aid payments have been received up to now, however, general obligation funds from the state regarding special education, transportation, early childhood and Title 1 are behind, according to some district superintendents.

But the lion's share of the \$3.1 billion is called "state fiscal stabilization" funds, and amounts to just over \$2 billion to schools to help save jobs and otherwise make up for funding lost because of state budget problems.

The governor has said he wants to use much of that money to make sure Illinois does not need to cut education in the current economic climate. The governor's proposed Fiscal Year 2010 budget would use stabilization funding to increase the state's investment in preschool through high school education by \$174 million and higher education by \$40 million.

The funding comes as local school districts have issued thousands of lay-off notices this spring to teachers, with untold numbers of administrators and classified school employees also being furloughed and laid off to cope with anticipated local budget shortfalls.

The federal stimulus—especially the fiscal stabilization money, affords some local discretion in its use. An overview of the federal requirements attached to the use of the stabilization funds by local school districts is available online at: http://www.isbe.net/funding/pdf/sfsf_fed_req_overview.pdf.

Most districts, however, are not acting to rescind layoff notices or cancel other cuts and many are leery of

creating new obligations because the federal funds will be one-time monies. Restrictions on the use of such funds limit the relief they bring, according to Ben Schwarm, IASB's Associate Executive Director.

The ED's guidance on use of the stimulus funds, posted on its Web site at <http://www.ed.gov>, asks education agencies to abide by four principles:

- Spend the funds quickly to save and create jobs
- Use the money to advance effective reforms
- Ensure transparency, reporting and accountability
- Invest the one-time funds wisely

To get funds distributed to education agencies as soon as possible, the ED has arranged to disburse the funds in two phases. Half of the Title I funds—about \$210 million—was to go out in April, along with half of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) funding—over \$262 million. The remainder of the funding, another half a billion dollars or so, will go out around July 1.

The governor has proposed to use these funds to avoid a late or reduced state aid payment schedule. School advocates have expressed their gratitude for the assurance of timely state aid payments, but questions remain.

According to the ED guidance, states will receive fiscal stabilization funds for education based on the proportion of their school-age residents and on total population. The state may use up to 18.2 percent of those funds for other government services, although it may elect to use the money for education purposes, including modernization and repair of school facilities.

The remaining 81.8 percent of the stabilization funds was to be distributed to local educational agencies to help restore funding to its 2008 level. The amount each school district and other local education group would receive in general state aid would come

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Referendum results are unfavorable in April 7 balloting

Only one of nine bond proposals win approval

The April 7 election was not particularly kind to school referenda.

Preliminary election results indicate that only one of the nine school bond proposals on the April 7 ballot was approved. It was approved by voters in **Belle Valley District 119, Belleville**, on a vote of 489 yes to 322 no.

Similarly, there were apparently just two successful countywide sales tax propositions approved in support of schools. The winning proposals were in Champaign County and Jo Daviess County. Ten other countywide sales tax propositions for schools were voted down.

Meanwhile, four of the seven tax increase proposals put forward by school districts apparently were adopted by voters. Preliminary results show referenda passing in **AIWood CUSD 225, Avoca District 37; CCSD 180,**

Burr Ridge; and New Holland-Middletown District 88.

Voters passed just one of two school district consolidation proposals on the ballot. Approved was the proposal to combine **Girard CUSD 3 with Virden CUSD 4.**

The recent trend in school district finance referendums is clearly downward, with fewer school tax rate and bond issue referenda being proposed by school boards. Since 2005, for example, the number of school tax rate elections on the April ballot has dwindled from 61 in 2005 to 27 in 2007, and down to just two in 2009.

The most recent trend has been downward in terms of referendum success as well, particularly with regard to school bond issues. For example, building bond elections in 2008 produced success rates of 72 percent and 50 percent, respectively, but elections in 2009 produced success rates of 0 percent and 13 percent.

Experts say the nation's current economic recession could be to blame for at least some of the current downturn in referendum propositions and their success rates.

In other school election results, teenage student Alyssa Hernandez was elected to the Rich High School District 227 Board of Education. By winning one of four open seats, the 18-year-old resident of Park Forest, who serves on the student council at Rich East High School, became the youngest member of any school board in the Chicago area.

Meanwhile, two weeks after voters chose new school board members in Champaign CUSD 4, one more winner was declared. Stig Lanesskog won a seat on the Champaign board by just two votes after absentee and provisional ballots were finally counted.

For a closer look at the trend in school finance elections visit <http://www.iasb.com/elections/finance.cfm>

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entirely from the stabilization funds.

But restoring funding to the 2008 level would tend to shortchange Illinois schools because the state managed to increase state funding to schools in 2008 while many other states were slashing state support. That is why school management lobbyists with the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance pushed hard to change the federal formula so that states like this one could choose which fiscal year was used to determine how much they would receive.

Competitive grants

The ED has also set aside \$5 billion to be distributed nationally on a competitive basis. States with innovative programs to drive educational reform, or those with programs that have shown results, may apply for "Race to the Top" and "Invest in What Works and Innovation" grants. Guidelines for the grants have not yet been provided, although the ED said the

grants will be awarded in fall 2009 and spring 2010.

School construction

The stimulus package contains no specific line item for school construction or modernization. It does, however, provide a \$24.8 billion guarantee for state and local bonds for school construction and modernization through the Qualified Zone Academy Bond (QZAB) program and a new Qualified School Construction Bond program.

Both bond programs offer the bond holder federal tax credits instead of interest. The new school construction bond program will cover new school construction and purchase of land, while QZAB bonds are for modernization and repair of existing facilities. The stimulus package devotes the bulk of the \$24.8 billion in funding—\$22 billion—to the new school construction bond program.

This is apparently going to be a

major boon for school districts, architects, bond firms, and related construction interests. Some have compared it to interest-free money, so insiders say it will be quite helpful.

According to one school facilities coordinator, the bond money can be spent on basically anything. The main question schools have to ask is, "Will it improve achievement of the students?" Experts suggest it can be spent on anything that will keep students warm, safe and dry and help educate them.

But how much will Illinois schools be eligible to receive? That has yet to be determined, and that answer will be determined to a large extent by how fast school districts can move to prepare and submit spending plans to secure a share.

Information about Illinois State Board of Education's American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) guidelines are available at: <http://isbe.net/arra/default.htm>.

Drive to revamp State Board of Education would alter appointment process via HB 80

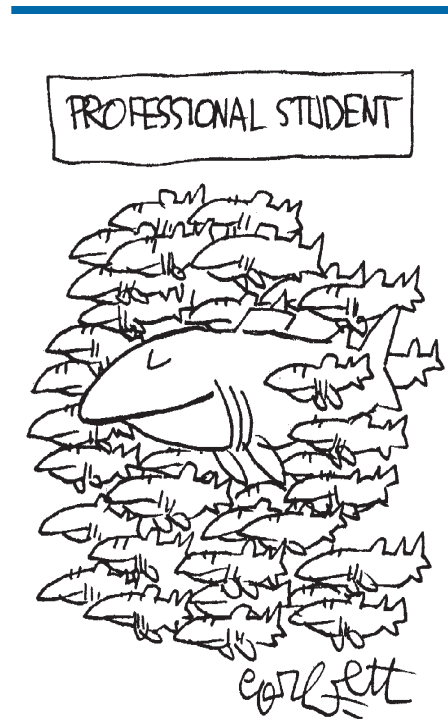
The Illinois House of Representatives approved a bill on Feb. 25 to restructure the Illinois State Board of Education. HB 80 (Lang, D-Chicago) passed out of the House on a vote of 91-24. The bill is now in the Senate, where it was assigned to the executive committee for consideration.

The bill would change how members of the state board are appointed. Instead of allowing the governor to pick whomever he wishes, the bill would require the governor to choose appointees from a list prepared by a nomination panel. The bill was approved unanimously by the House education committee and will now be considered by the full House.

The nomination panel would consist of: two former school superintendents, a former elementary school teacher, a former high school teacher, two former legislators involved in education issues, and one education advocate from a not-for-profit organization. The panel would be required to solicit recommendations from the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance and other school management groups (ED-RED, LEND, SCOPE), the IEA, the IFT, the regional superintendents' organization, and several other interested

groups.

As for the members of the state board of education, at least one would have to be a former school board member, at least one a former school superintendent, at least one a former teacher, and at least one with business experience. The board would still consist of eight members plus a chairman. Board members would serve six-year terms instead of the current four-year term.



CALENDAR OF EVENTS

June 12-13 – Basics of Governance & Law on Board meetings & Practices Workshop, The Westin Itasca Northwest, Fri., 9:30 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.; Sat., 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

June 13 – Comprehensive Workshop for Board Presidents, The Westin Itasca Northwest, 8 a.m. – 4 p.m.

June 24 – South Cook Executive Committee Meeting, TBD

June 29 – Three Rivers Executive & Governing Board Meeting, Rockdale, 6 p.m.

July 11 – Basics of School District Finance, NIU Naperville, 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

July 18 – Basics of School District Finance, Embassy Suites, East Peoria, 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

July 25 – Basics of School District Finance, Holiday Inn Carbondale, 8:30 a.m. – 3 p.m.

July 30 – South Cook Executive & Governing Board Meeting, 6 p.m., TBD

For more information about coming events, see the IASB Web site at www.iasb.com/calendar/.