

Illinois SCHOOL BOARD *Newsbulletin*

November-December 2006 / Issue No. 656

Delegates push for construction grants, state aid

Vote against board pay, representation by size

Members of the Illinois Association of School Boards at their annual meeting on Nov. 18 in Chicago resolved to demand stronger state support for the school construction grant program and to push for a constitutional amendment to make the state pay most of the cost of school funding.

Delegates representing 406 local school boards unanimously adopted resolutions to pursue those and other aims during the Delegate Assembly, which is held as part of the Joint Annual Conference.

The resolution supporting the current school construction grant program insists that school districts that have applied for and qualified for a school construction grant entitlement should not be penalized, passed over or have their grant canceled if or when a new state grant program is launched.

Sponsored by **Triad C.U. District 2**, Troy, the resolution demands that all school districts with an approved school construction grant entitlement shall be paid the amount of the entitlement in its entirety before any new

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Representatives from more than 400 school districts cast their votes on resolutions at the Delegate Assembly on Saturday at the 2006 Joint Annual Conference

Attendance strong again for Joint Annual Conference

A total of 767 Illinois public school districts sent representatives to this year's Joint Annual Conference on Nov. 17-19 in Chicago.

Registration exceeded 10,000 for the second straight year, with 5,409 paid registrants and 4,611 guests. Total attendance exceeded 11,500, including 1,561 exhibitors. Paid registration figures included 3,532 board members and 1,744 school administrators.

As in most years, a wide variety of subjects and activities were offered for those who attended the three general sessions, five Chicago school tours, eight pre-conference workshops, 118 panels, and 220 exhibit booths of school products, services and vendors.

Panel sessions included topics in governance/leadership, student achievement, finance and funding, community relations, facilities/transportation/

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School capital needs assessment forms being processed

A new law, Public Act 93-489, requires the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Capital Development Board (CDB) to file a comprehensive assessment report of the capital needs of all school districts every two years to the governor and legislature. The second such report is due to the governor and lawmakers before Jan. 1, 2007. The first report was submitted in February 2005.

To meet this requirement before the spring session of the 95th General Assembly, ISBE asked all districts to complete and submit the School Capital Needs Assessment form by Oct. 31. ISBE and CDB use all the data received from that form to communicate the capital needs of school districts to state officials.

For more information about the progress of this important task, contact Susan Weitekamp of the ISBE at 217-785-8779 or Marcy Joerger of the CDB at 217-782-8708.

Test result delays cause concerns on school report cards

Frustrated school administrators throughout Illinois are waiting far past the deadline this year for school test results from the Illinois Standards Achievement Test (ISAT) and the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE). The delay has meant schools could not tell parents and communities whether students met performance targets on the state tests taken in the spring.

The state deadline for districts to issue their results, by way of School Report Cards, was Oct. 31. But districts throughout the state were unable to provide the results because the Illinois State Board of Education had yet to finalize the data.

Local districts seek authority for achieving racial diversity

The National School Boards Association (NSBA) is urging the U.S. Supreme Court to allow school districts to use race as one factor in assigning students to sought-after openings in schools. The court heard oral arguments on Dec. 4, in the cases of *Parents Involved in Community Schools v. Seattle School District #1* and *Meredith v. Jefferson County Board of Education*.

NSBA, along with seven other education organizations, submitted a friend-of-the-court brief that points out that local officials have the expertise and knowledge to adopt voluntary measures to foster racial integration, and create a more racially diverse learning environment. These measures, the brief notes, are narrowly tailored to the schools' educational goals, and the racial criteria neither operate like quotas nor unduly burden individuals on the basis of their race.

"Local boards evaluate academic research, weigh all sides of the issue and give substantial consideration to community values and interests before agreeing on a final decision," said Anne L. Bryant, NSBA executive director.

Also see seminar updates school attorneys on case law, page 6

"We believe the court should defer to the expertise of these elected board members whose primary goal is to ensure that all children receive a high-quality education."

The brief also notes that the court traditionally has deferred to local school boards' judgment in planning education policy for their local communities. That deference, according to the brief, should include race-conscious student assignment policies adopted by local school boards to promote the benefits of a racially diverse learning environment in K-12 education.

"These cases are about allowing local school boards to decide with their communities what is in the best interests of all students," said Francisco Negrón, NSBA general counsel. "It is very important that the court not replace the judgment of local school boards with a federally mandated one-size-fits-all approach."

NSBA's complete brief can be found online at <http://www.nsba.org/site/docs/39400/39326.pdf>.

Superintendent to assume duties as LUDA executive

At the 26th annual fall conference of the Large Unit District Association in Chicago members approved the appointment of Diane Rutledge as the next LUDA Executive Director, replacing Robin Miller. Rutledge is retiring as district superintendent in **Springfield SD 186** at the end of the current school year. LUDA is an organization of large unit public school districts in Illinois.



Diane Rutledge

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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New state rules on school, home foods take effect

More revisions likely to follow task force report

Propelled by Gov. Rod Blagojevich's pronouncement a year ago that some foods should be banned from Illinois schools, the Legislature's Joint Committee on Administrative Rules (JCAR) made the ban official in October. Although state rules already prohibited the sale of so-called junk food in elementary schools during breakfast and lunch, the new administrative action prohibits the sale of certain foods throughout the entire school day and expands the ban to middle schools.

The School Management Alliance strongly opposed the rule making, saying it goes beyond "junk food" and takes authority away from locally elected boards of education.

"Ask any parent if they want their child drinking soda and eating candy at school, and they'll say no," Blagojevich said in a press release.

The Illinois State Board of Education has authority to control food policies under the National School Lunch Program, which also mandated that school districts establish wellness policies by the start of 2005. A growing number of states have enacted school junk food bans until after lunch, but

only a few have gone as far as Illinois in banning certain food in all schools all day. Florida bans the sale of certain foods in elementary schools all day and in secondary schools until after lunch.

The new ban approved by JCAR does not go into effect immediately. According to ISBE spokesperson Meta Minton, the state will work with schools to achieve compliance, but schools are expected to honor vending contracts.

The contents of lunches brought from home are exempt currently, although some schools make it known that pop and candy are not welcome.

Task force to define standards

Another provision of the new rule states that during the month of January 2007, or immediately following the release of the report of the School Wellness Policy Task Force, the state board will initiate a revision to school food and beverage standards as recommended by the task force.

The group has already completed its draft recommendations and has requested feedback from education organizations. Key points are these:

- Illinois would prescribe rigid statewide school nutrition standards for every school district.
- High schools would be covered by the state's nutrition standards.

- Standards would be different for pre-kindergarten through grade 5 from the standards for grades 6-12.
- No carbonated beverages would be allowed (even in high schools).
- One size would not fit all: under the recommended standards, both the four-year old pre-kindergarten student and the high school senior football player would be allowed one ounce of cheese.

But school management organizations are not happy with another recommendation of the task force, which states that "food and beverages brought from home" would also have to meet the nutrition standards.

"This would allow the state to dictate to parents what they can feed their children," according to Ben Schwarm, Associate Executive Director of IASB, and lead lobbyist with the Illinois Statewide School Management Alliance.

(Editor's note: IASB has updated its large online compilation of resources addressing child nutrition, obesity and physical activity. The special feature, compiled in 2004, is called "Weighing Healthier Options" and is now consistent with recent changes in laws and regulations. The feature is located at <http://www.iasb.com/healthy/>.

Teacher of the year enlists students in poverty fight

A technology instructor from southern Illinois was named the 2006-2007 Illinois Teacher of the Year during the 32nd annual Those Who Excel banquet on Oct. 7.

Honored with the award was Joe Fatheree, who began in the teaching profession in 1990 as an English teacher at the high school in Effingham CUSD 40. In 1994 he switched to history and since 2000 has been a technology instructor.

Three years ago Fatheree launched an effort to teach about extreme poverty. His pupils collect books and coats

for homeless children in the St. Louis area.

Principal Mike McCollum says Fatheree has a unique ability to teach any and all levels of students: "he goes out of his way to recruit students of varied learning abilities for his program. He has a way of bringing out the best qualities in all his students and helps them do the same for other students."

As teacher of the year, Fatheree will spend the spring speaking at teacher workshops, conferences and community meetings. He will also receive a lifetime tuition waiver to state uni-

versities and a one-semester paid leave to do course work.



Joe Fatheree, this year's teaching award winner, poses with 2005 winner Jacquie Bolger.

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school construction program is implemented.

Currently, 24 districts are waiting for the state to fund \$149 million worth of approved school construction projects. The state has not authorized any funds for such work, however, since November 2004.

“The current school construction grant program, in existence (but not always funded) since 1997, has been a very fair, efficient, and effective program for public school districts in Illinois. This program should have continued support by the Association,” according to an IASB resolutions committee rationale.

Another adopted resolution seeks improvements in constitutional language on school funding and calls for IASB to support passage of an amendment to the Illinois Constitution that would make education a “fundamental right.” Introduced by **Danville CUSD 118**, the resolution would make it “a paramount duty for the state to provide a thorough and efficient system of public education.” It would also establish that the state has the “preponderant financial responsibility for financing the system of public education.”

The district’s aim is passage of an amendment mandating the state to fund education at least at a 50 percent level. The sponsors say the present language regarding education funding in the Illinois Constitution has either been “misinterpreted or ignored.” As a result, the state provides less than 40 percent of the funds used to pay for the state’s portion of public education.

Last year IASB delegates decided to actively promote a constitutional convention when the option goes before voters in 2008 as required by the 1970 Illinois Constitution. The question of whether to convene a constitutional convention must go before Illinois voters at least every twenty years, according to terms of the 1970 Constitution. The last such vote was taken in 1988, and the next one will be in 2008 unless state lawmakers set an earlier date.

The decision this year was to push for another solution to the same problem, namely a constitutional amendment on school funding. This was one of the key actions taken by school board representatives at the policy-setting delegate assembly. School board delegates also voted to adopt other reso-



Delegates weigh opposing viewpoints before voting to set IASB positions on issues.

lutions involving school finances to:

- Allow school districts that consolidate to use whatever school construction grant index offers the highest payment, thus offering more incentive for consolidation. The proposal aims to allow small communities to have a better chance to build a new high school at a substantially lower cost to taxpayers. The resolution was sponsored by **Paris CUSD 4**.
- Change requirements for truth-in-taxation notices published in newspapers to better reflect the actual impact on taxpayers when tax levies are to be increased or decreased. The aim is to better reflect the natural economic appreciation effect of changes in property values when school districts are required to report the percentage of increase or decrease over the previous year’s tax levy. The resolution was sponsored by **Mari-on CUSD 2**.
- Encourage lawmakers to study the idea of allowing school districts access

to additional methods of raising revenue from both state and local sources, including sales tax revenue. The sponsors said a way must be found to ease property taxes in the near future or schools with serious financial problems could be “turning over their keys” to the state. The resolution was sponsored by **East Peoria CHSD 309**.

- Authorize local school boards, when awarding contracts through bids, to favor local contractors whose bids fall within 2 percent of the lowest responsible bidder. The aim is to recognize that local bidders offer many assets to local school districts by paying local taxes, employing local taxpayers, and generally supporting the school district and the community. It was sponsored by **Pekin CHSD 303**.
- Authorize local school boards to determine whether a teacher may exercise the Early Retirement Option (ERO) with the Teachers Retirement System. Supporters said giving the school district such authority is justified because when an employee takes the ERO there is a substantial and immediate cost to the school district. The resolution was sponsored by **Jasper County CUSD 1**, Newton.

These resolutions were among the eight that were recommended for adoption. Another resolution adopted by the delegates seeks federal help to correct for a key conflict between the federal No Child Left Behind laws and the law on special education. IASB delegates resolved to call on the federal education agency to clarify the assessment rules under NCLB to allow for out-of-grade level assessments to evaluate students whose Individualized Education Plan (IEP) calls for such testing. Sponsors said a student would not be in need of an IEP if he or she was meeting the usual grade-level goals for students of his or her chronological age. Yet NCLB typically expects IEP students to perform on the NCLB assess-

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ment targeted for the student's chronological age, all but guaranteeing failure. The resolution was sponsored by **Indian Prairie CUSD 204**, Naperville.

Resolutions defeated

School board delegates also chose not to support a number of other ideas, including resolutions that would have pushed to:

- Do away with the practice of allowing one voting delegate per school district at the IASB delegate assembly. The defeated amendment to IASB's constitution, which drew only 10 votes in support from among 406 voting delegates, called for allowing two to five delegates for larger school districts, based on student attendance. Charlotte Kegarise, the school board secretary from, **Schaumburg CCSD 54**, explained: "Equalized representation based on both geography and population is a vital part of the success of a fair and honest representative democratic process." The opposing view was expressed by Roger Pfister, a school board member from **Carbondale ESD 95**, and a member of IASB's Board of Directors. Pfister said the IASB board voted unanimously against the proposal because: "We want to build on common ground in the association, and this approach has been effective in working with the legislature. We are at the table and being listened to

in the legislative process because we represent all the school districts, and they [legislators] know that."

- Compensate school board members on a per-meeting rate to offset common expenses. An IASB committee raised concerns about what kind of message that would send, and whether it might even undermine the credibility of volunteer school board members. The resolution was sponsored by **Genoa-Kingston CUSD 424**.
- Promote the consolidation of all Illinois school districts into unit districts. Concerns about forcing school consolidation against the wishes of local schools leaders and citizens apparently doomed the proposal. The resolution was sponsored by **Barrington CUSD 220**.
- Allow non-resident students to be charged tuition when appropriate. There was concern about the flexibility in the proposal, and about uniformity of tuition charges from one district to the next. The resolution was sponsored by **Freeburg CCSD 70**.
- Authorize school districts to include any part of a state exam as part of its graduation requirements. Concerns were raised about using just one high-stakes test to judge student growth. The resolution was sponsored by **East Peoria CHSD 309**.
- Require Tax Increment Finance (TIF)

districts and enterprise zones to continue to pay school-related taxes. Some said it would be better to reaffirm IASB's existing positions opposing any erosion of the property tax base and supporting basic changes in the TIF law. This resolution was sponsored by **East Peoria CHSD 309**.

These resolutions were among the 10 recommended for defeat by the IASB resolutions committee. This year's Assembly voted on 18 new resolutions, 11 amendments and 11 reaffirmations.

IASB officers elected

Delegates also voted to re-elect IASB officers for the coming year.

Marie Slater was elected for a second one-year term as president of the Illinois Association of School Boards. She has served on the **Wheaton Warrenville CUSD 200** Board of Education since 1986.

Mark C. Metzger was elected as vice president of IASB for a second one-year term. He has been a member of the **Indian Prairie CUSD 204** Board of Education, Naperville, since 1991.

"It is good to see the democratic process at work within our Association," said IASB President Marie Slater. "This was a lively session of the Delegate Assembly, and the positions the delegates adopted were obviously well thought out ideas that we can all get behind and support," Slater added.

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technology, current issues, school law, governmental relations, best practices, and special topics for newer board members. The three-day Conference drew 8,650 people to panel events, for an average attendance of 73 persons per panel.

Awards were presented for the state's outstanding school board president, superintendent of the year, school building designs, and workmen's compensation cost reduction efforts.

Other activities included the Conference bookstore and author book signings, the Carousel of Panels, Invi-

tational Exhibition of Educational Environments, and School Public Relations Advice Center. Another popular event was the IASB Comiskey Room, where Association benefits and services were explained and demonstrated.

Next year's Conference will be held Nov. 16-18, at the Hyatt Regency, Sheraton and Swissotel in downtown Chicago.

(Note: additional stories and photos from this year's conference will be published in the January-February issue of the Illinois School Board Journal and on the IASB Web site.)



Panel presenters spoke to large crowds of school leaders.

Attorneys discuss meetings act, student conduct

Seminar updates ICOSA members on case law

Case law in *Rice v. Board of Trustees of Adams County* regarding the Illinois Open Meetings Act (OMA) stipulates that no final action may be taken by a school board on items or topics not specifically set forth on the board's agenda, according to Chicago attorney Patricia J. Whitten, of Franczek Sullivan, P.C.

Whitten reminded an audience of school attorneys who met before the 2006 Joint Annual Conference that boards are allowed to consider items not on the agenda for the given board meeting, but the board can take no final action there on those items.

Whitten spoke at the 20th Annual School Law Seminar on Friday, Nov. 17. The pre-conference event was sponsored by the Illinois Council of School Attorneys, an organization affiliated with Illinois Association of School Boards and the National School Boards Association. The event provides Illinois school attorneys with an opportunity to share information about key legal issues facing their school clients, including presentations this year on attendance limitations, employee speech, student conduct policies, student diversity, and special education.

Steve Rotello, from the Office of the Illinois Attorney General, also discussed another more recent case pertaining to the OMA and its 2004 provision that requires verbatim recording (audio or video) of closed sessions of school board meetings. The 2006 case, *Kodish v. Oakbrook Terrace Fire Protection District*, specified that closed-session, tape-recorded discussions with legal counsel are not automatically exempt from disclosure. The case provided guidance on the application of legal privileges and examined the interplay between federal law and the OMA.

But the court in this federal ruling ignored existing state law on attorney-client privilege, according to Rotello.



Challenging the school attorneys was Steve Rotello, the state's Senior Assistant Attorney General.

"I'm highly confident this amendment would not have passed without the confidentiality provision," he added.

(Editor's note: IASB recently published a new *Open Meetings Act* guide online at: <http://www.iasb.com/files/schboardmeetings.pdf>.)

Student conduct, attendance

Another seminar topic of interest to school boards dealt with enforcing student conduct policies and attendance requirements. Attorneys Darcy L. Kriha and Dana Crumley, both from

the law firm of Ranczek Sullivan, P.C., Chicago, reported that recent legal developments can be helpful to schools in enforcing procedures requiring standards of student behavior and regular attendance.

One of the most useful tools for pursuing these goals, they said, is reciprocal reporting agreements between law enforcement agencies and schools. Presenters discussed the most recent court case pertaining to such agreements, *Jordan v. O'Fallon Township High School District No. 203*, in which an appellate court upheld an agreement.

Such agreements call for sharing contact information and the designation of liaisons, both at the school and the police agency involved. The agreements typically require a two-way exchange of information about student crime and potential crime. In the *Jordan* case, the court ruled that a high school acted in good faith in removing a student from a school football team for violating its policy on alcohol, even though the police were held to have acted improperly in disclosing the student's alcohol use to the school.

Recent Statutory Changes to the Open Meetings Act

Public Act 94-1058 (effective Jan. 1, 2007)

Redefines a "meeting" to include gatherings, whether in person or by telephone call, video or audio conference, electronic means (such as email, chat, and instant messaging), or other such means for the purpose of discussing public business. It requires that the number of public body members necessary to constitute a quorum must be physically present at an open meeting, and permits participation and voting by other members by audio and video conference. Also requires that a quorum must be physically present at a closed meeting and permits participating and voting by other members by video or audio conference.

Specifies the circumstances under

which a body may permit absent members to participate by electronic means to the following limited instances: personal illness or disability; employment reasons; business of the public body; and emergency. Requires that all meeting minutes reflect whether members were present in person or participating by electronic means.

Public Act 94-28

Effective January 1, 2006: A public body that has a website that full-time staff maintains, must post on its Web site the agenda of any regular meeting and a notice of the schedule of regular meetings. The failure to post an agenda on the Web site will not invalidate any meeting or actions.

New rules take effect for principal evaluations

Deadlines, mentoring part of new regulations

A new state law, P.A. 94-1039, requires that superintendents must complete evaluations by Feb. 1 of the final year of a principal's contract. Failure to complete an evaluation on time means that the principal's contract is automatically extended.

The law took effect with little fanfare on July 20. Specifically it requires that principals be evaluated by the superintendent, or by his or her designee who holds a Type 75 certificate, or by someone appointed by the school board who holds such a certificate. Principals will be deemed "satisfactory" if their evaluations are not completed by Feb. 1 of the final year of their contract.

Beginning with the 2006-2007 school year, districts must establish a principal evaluation plan in accordance with these requirements. Exempted from these requirements are school districts organized under Article 34 of the School Code, which applies only to school districts located in cities of more than 500,000 inhabitants.

The law also requires that any principal (including those who wear two hats as superintendent/principal) hired after July 1, 2007 must com-

There are a few pitfalls [contained in the new rules] for school leaders to avoid...

plete a principal mentoring program during their first year as a principal, provided funding is made available. In such a program, the new principal must be mentored by an experienced principal who has at least three years' experience on the job. Funding to support this program likely will go directly to the school district and an option would be for the district to operate the mentoring program itself.

There are a few pitfalls for school leaders to avoid, according to the Illinois Association of School Administrators (IASA). Participants should note how the Feb. 1 date for evaluation and the [long established] April 1 statutory date for notice of nonrenewal may play out in the employ-

ment of a principal who may be performing unsatisfactorily. The statutory section on reclassification of principals (105 ILCS 5/10-23.8b) also may apply, even if a principal is evaluated as unsatisfactory within all the mandated timeframes.

Another pitfall is that districts that pay mentoring principals need to be aware that these stipends likely will be considered creditable earnings (for six percent excess payment purposes). This potential pitfall pertains to a recent state law limiting retirement benefits paid to school employees.

One last pitfall, which may apply to certain school board members, was identified by IASA. It concerns the provision in the new law pertaining to principals who are also superintendents. As noted, the law requires that such principal/superintendents must be evaluated by someone who holds a Type 75 certificate. But school board members who may hold Type 75 certificates might not be able to participate in subsequent employment decisions if they have performed such an evaluation. That could be suspect from a conflict-of-interest standpoint, according to IASA.

School personnel administrators form own group

A western Cook County school district announced on Oct. 2 the formation of the first statewide education human resources association in Illinois, to be known as the Illinois Association of School Personnel Administrators (IASPA).

Lyons THSD 204, La Grange, made the announcement after Supt. Dennis G. Kelly won a federal grant to support the launch of IASPA and develop a model teacher recruitment program. "IASPA will help us reach our goals and also help school districts in Illinois recruit the best teachers available," Kelly said.

IASPA will provide human resource

and personnel directors who work in Illinois school systems a network of professional support. At startup its members included more than three dozen school districts in Illinois, with membership open to all 1,000 pre-K-12 private and public school personnel administrators.

The IASPA mission is to connect human resource and personnel leaders across the state in over 1,000 public and private school systems in order to provide schools and students with the most highly qualified, professional staffs possible. IASPA will provide members with strategies for the recruit-

ment, retention, and development of teachers, administrators, and support staff and also seeks to connect school HR professionals with college/university and other placement agencies.

The development and dissemination of sound personnel practices is part of IASPA mission, according to the organization. Positive employer-employee relations, employment/labor legal issues, collective bargaining agreement processes, and employee assistance/counseling programs are just a few of the issues IASPA hopes to address.

To learn more visit their Web site: <http://www.iaspa.org>.

Bond issues, tax hikes, consolidation proposals fare well in November elections

Illinois school boards achieved above-average success in tax rate propositions on the Nov. 7 ballot, winning three of seven tax increase proposals for a 43 percent approval rating. Voters approved an even better percentage of bond issues, with 10 of 17 bond issues, or 59 percent, passing.

Over the past 17 years, tax rate increase proposals have averaged a 36 percent success rate in general elections. This year's figure was the highest for any November election since 1998. All three tax hikes approved were education fund increases; voters were not asked to consider any operations and maintenance fund or transportation fund proposals.

Tax increase questions had fared poorly in the past three November general elections in even-numbered years. Only one of 14 school tax rate increases were approved in 2000 (7 percent), followed by 12 of 58 in 2002 (21 percent), and 7 of 43 in 2004 (16 percent).

The three school districts winning tax rate increases this time were: **Fieldcrest CUSD 6**, Minonk (65 cents); **Creston CCSD 161** (41 cents), and **Triopia CUSD 27**, Concord (70 cents).

Besides tax increases, voters approved three of 18 propositions on the ballot to increase the "limiting tax rate," which essentially increases the level of the so-called tax cap limitation. Voters approved such increases in **Riley CCSD 18**, Marengo; **Winthrop Harbor SD 1**, and **Lincolnshire-Prairie View SD 103**.

These three limiting tax rate increases were approved under authority of a new law, adopted in the spring 2006 session of the legislature as Senate Bill 1682 (now Public Act 94-976). The legislation overhauled the Property Tax Extension Limitation Law (PTELL) – commonly known as the "tax caps" law – in an effort to provide a more rational system for voting tax rate increases. The amendments also impact-

ed how referenda questions will appear on the ballot and require new "supplemental information" regarding the impact on taxpayers for voters in counties where the PTELL limiting rate is in effect. The new law enables districts

Winning bond propositions ranged from \$1.2 million in Kincaid to \$450 million in Oswego.

to budget their resources more consistently and seek an increase in the limiting rate for up to four years.

The changes basically eliminated the option for school districts subject to PTELL to seek a direct increase in their statutory tax rate through referendum, even if the tax rate currently is less than the maximum rate permitted by law. But the new law does, in effect, permit the tax rate to be increased, but not above the legal limit, and only for up to four years.

Bond issues approved

Bond issues proved successful in: **South Fork SD 14**, Kincaid; **Deer Creek-Mackinaw CUSD 701**; **Schiller Park SD 81**; **Ridgewood CHSD 234**, Norridge; **Aviston SD 21**; **North Boone CUSD 200**, Poplar Grove; **Oswego CUSD 308**; **Lake Forest CHSD 115**; **Marion CUSD 2**; and **O'Fallon CCSD 90**.

Winning bond propositions ranged from \$1.2 million in Kincaid to \$450 million in Oswego.

School district consolidations adopted

In addition to school finance questions, all three school district consolidation proposals on the ballot were approved in November. Voters agreed to combine **Pekin Public SD 108** with

Pekin CHSD 303 in Tazewell County.

Voters also approved a consolidation proposition involving two Warren County districts, allowing **United CUSD 304**, Alexis, to annex and simultaneously dissolve **Yorkwood CUSD 225**, in Monmouth.

Voters approved an advisory question in Cook County about whether to consolidate **Berwyn North SD 98**, **Berwyn South SD 100** and Morton West High School.

On yet another ballot question, voters in **Kansas CUSD 3** in Edgar County adopted a proposal to elect school board members at-large.

Democracy school designation given to four districts

The Illinois Civic Mission Coalition recently honored four high schools as the first Illinois Democracy Schools. Held in the chambers of the Illinois Supreme Court in Chicago, Supreme Court Judge Thomas Fitzgerald hosted and greeted the group.

Schools that undertook the rigorous curriculum and met the criteria to become a Democracy School included: Bartlett High School, Geneva High School, Lake Park High School and West Chicago High School.

Each winning school completed a comprehensive assessment, and teacher teams from the schools also worked with the Coalition to infuse civics into existing curricula, and create new democratic experiences for students.

"Democracy Schools are schools where the rights, obligations and tensions of citizenship in a constitutional democracy are consistently taught," explained Carolyn Pereira, executive director of the Constitutional Rights Foundation Chicago, which chairs the coalition.

Contracts follow most intent-to-strike notifications

As of Dec. 6, a total of 17 Illinois school districts had received intent-to-strike notices this school year, with actual strikes staged in Neoga CUSD 3; Mendota Township High School Dist. 280; and Wolf Branch Dist. 113, Swansea.

Eleven of the 18 school districts that received strike notices this year have already settled their contract disputes. One recent settlement was obtained in the Neoga district, following a strike that lasted 16 days. The most recent notice occurred on Nov. 30 in **Peoria SD 150**, where negotiations led to a tentative agreement on Dec. 10.

The list of other recent contract settlements includes:

Prairie Hills ESD 144, Markham – Bargaining unit size: 210 IEA/NEA Certified Staff. Notice filed Sep. 15; settled Oct. 4

Mendota THSD 280 – Bargaining unit size: 49 IEA/NEA Teachers. Notice filed Aug. 28; strike began Sep. 25; settled Sep. 27

Rantoul THSD 193 – Bargaining Unit Size: 60 IEA/NEA Certified Staff. Notice filed Aug. 25; settled Sep. 18

Alton CUSD 11 – Bargaining Unit Size: 43 IEA/NEA Certified Staff and 211 IEA/NEA Non-Certified Staff. Notice filed Sep. 1; settled Sep. 6

Galatia CUSD 1 – Bargaining Unit Size: 35 IEA/NEA Certified Staff. Notice filed Aug. 23; settled Sep. 5

Eureka CUSD 140 – Bargaining Unit Size: 95 IEA/NEA Certified Staff. Notice filed Aug. 21; settled Aug. 30

Wolf Branch SD 113, Swansea – Bargaining Unit Size: 53 IFT/AFT Teachers. Notice filed Aug. 7; strike began Aug. 18; settled Aug. 27

McHenry CHSD 156 – Bargaining Unit Size: 151 IEA/NEA Certified Staff. Notice filed Aug. 15; settled Aug. 21

Whiteside SD 115, Belleville – Bargaining Unit Size: 80 IFT/AFT Teachers. Notice filed Aug. 7; settled Aug. 21

Source: IASA Web site, follow link under Labor Relations at: <http://www.iasaedu.org/vnews/display.v/SEC/Publications> .

NEWS HEADLINES

Arlington Heights (Oct. 23, *Chicago Tribune*) Northwest suburban Township High School Dist. 214 adopts a controversial-issues education procedure. A part of the academic handbook for 2007-08, it allows parents to grant or refuse permission for their students to participate in assignments using controversial material.

Chicago (Oct. 5, *Chicago Tribune*) A teachers organization files a lawsuit against the windy city's first virtual charter school, arguing that the home-based school violates state law. The suit, filed in Cook County Circuit Court, asks the judge to halt state and city payments to the Chicago Virtual Charter School, reportedly Illinois' first public school where grade school students do their coursework from home at their own pace.

Chicago (Nov. 4, U.S. Dept. of Education) Federal education officials announce an award of \$27.4 million in teaching grants to Chicago District 299. The five-year grant will fund financial incentives to teachers and principals who boost achievement in high-poverty schools and recruit effective teachers there.

Elgin (Oct. 4, *Chicago Tribune*) The U-46 board plans to consider the recommendations of a committee studying the state's new higher graduation standards. The committee recommends increasing district requirements for graduation credits from 40 to 44, and making U-46 standards more rigorous than the state's.

Galva (Sep. 29, *The Star Courier*, Kewanee) The Galva district continues looking at increasing assessed valuation if proposed wind turbines are erected there. If the project goes through, the district might get 141 wind turbines, which could increase the district's assessed valuation by 50 to 70 percent.

Granville (Sep. 28, *News Tribune*, LaSalle) In a split decision at a special meeting, the board of Putnam

County CUSD 535 decided to make renovations and additions to Hennepin Elementary School instead of building a new school in Granville near a tornado-damaged building.

Kansas (Nov. 8, *Charleston Times-Courier*) Voters defeat a Nov. 7 referendum to elect Kansas school board members at large and without restriction as to their area of residence within the district. Currently, no more than three board members may be elected from any one of the district's five congressional townships.

Mendota (Sep. 27, *News Tribune*, LaSalle) Mendota High School students head back to class after the teachers' union and the board agree on a tentative contract. Negotiators met from 7 p.m. on Sep. 26 until 5:30 a.m. on Sep. 27.

Ottawa (Oct. 19, *The Times*, Ottawa) The Ottawa Elementary District 141 school board opts to join the Illinois Energy Consortium to purchase electricity for the district. "(IEC) will save us money," said Superintendent Craig Doster. "They will do all the work we need. They will do the analysis. They will find the best rates. They will go out and get a price we can afford."

Ottawa (Oct. 17, *The Times*, Ottawa) School report cards will not be available for parents from Ottawa Township High School or any other high school in the state by the end of the month as required by law, the OTHS board learns on Oct. 16.

Springfield (Nov. 6, Illinois Association of School Administrators' Web site) The IASA announces the establishment of the Dr. Walter H. Warfield & Dr. Jacob S. Broncato AAC Scholarship. Each year, twenty-one scholarships will be awarded to school administrators, one to each IASA region, entitling each recipient to attend one IASA-sponsored Administrators' Academy Credit Course at no cost.

Student aspirations essential part of school reform

Principals conference hears Russell Quaglia

Student aspirations expert Russell J. Quaglia discussed how student aspirations can be used proactively in school reform initiatives in an address before the Illinois Principals Association's 2006 annual conference in Springfield on Oct. 16. Quaglia shared eight "conditions" that need to be present in schools in order to help students reach their goals.

The eight conditions have names like "Belonging," "Curiosity and Creativity" and "Spirit of Adventure." The others are "Heroes," "Sense of Accomplishment," "Fun and Excitement," "Leadership and Responsibility," and "Confidence to Take Action."

Helping educators create these conditions in schools through workshops, guidebooks, web-based surveys, conference addresses, and extensive

on-site training is what Quaglia does as executive director of the Center for Research and Educational Advancement at Endicott College. He is also a professor of education.

"Standardized tests can tell us much about a school, but do they provide a complete picture? Many researchers think not. As politicians and educational policy makers battle it out over higher standards and increased testing, there is one group that has not been heard from," says Quaglia, "and that's the students."

"We need to step back from the whirl of political rhetoric and education initiatives," according to Quaglia. "In our rush to test everything that moves, and compare and put a num-



Russell J. Quaglia

ber or percentage on every student," Quaglia continues, "we've lost sight of the target, the whole child. We need to concentrate on the critical component that can make a difference for all students: their aspirations."

His tips for doing this began with simple advice: "ask how they're doing, and wait for the answer." He also said schools need to recognize kids for success, as well as effort, perseverance and citizenship, and they need to put fun and excitement back into the learning environment. "But our biggest challenge is to install purpose in kids' lives, to ask 'who are you as a person, and who do you want to become.'" He added that kids drop out of school because they don't have a clear purpose for being there.

Quaglia made those remarks at the first session of the IPA conference, following installation of IPA's 2006-2007 officers, after opening remarks by Jason Leahy, IPA's new Executive Director.

Public hearings will focus on curbing dropouts

The recently formed Illinois Task Force on Re-Enrolling Students Who Dropped out of School met for its first public hearing on Nov. 29 in Springfield. The statewide panel, which includes IASB representation, is planning a series of hearings around the state and is expected to issue an interim report of its findings in early 2007.

The new task force had kicked off with a statewide summit on Oct. 24 that focused on efforts to keep kids in school, and to continue reducing the state's drop-out rate. Legislators, educators, advocates and state agencies first came together on that date to focus on ways to re-enroll students who have dropped out.

Created through a resolution of the legislature earlier this year, the task force is composed of eight legislators; representatives from Gov. Rod Blagojevich's office and numerous state agen-

cies; plus 13 individuals, including IASB's Deputy Executive Director Michael L. Bartlett.

Over the last several years, Illinois has taken aggressive steps to keep students in school. A state law increased the dropout age from 16 to 17. The state also launched programs such as the Truant Alternative Program and the Optional Education Program to re-enroll students. The state budget includes more than \$18 million for these programs, as well as an additional \$24 million to fund after-school programs throughout the state.

Last year, the dropout rate for Illinois students showed the greatest one-year improvement since 1994.

"While we've made good progress in making sure kids who are in school stay in school, we need to reach out to re-enroll all those kids who have dropped out," said Gov. Blagojevich. "That means creating a learning environment that

works for them so they can get back on track and get the training and education they'll need for long-term success."

More than 210,000 youth nationwide, age 16 through 24, were out of school in 2000 and can be classified as dropouts, according to 2000 Census data. In April, a *Time* magazine cover story entitled "Dropout Nation" outlined the scope of this crisis, and in a speech last year to the National Education Summit on High Schools, Bill Gates noted "We have one of the highest high school dropout rates in the industrialized world."

Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Chairman Jesse Ruiz stated that "In Illinois we need to build on what we've achieved in the last few years for students who have dropped out. The challenge is clear. We need a com-

See **DROPOUTS** on page 11

LaSalle member earns ISBE's school board president award

Brian Waitkus, president of the LaSalle ESD 122 Board of Education, was honored by the Illinois State Board of Education with the 2006 Thomas Lay Burroughs Award for the state's Outstanding School Board President. The award was presented on Sunday, Nov. 19, during the third general session of the Joint Annual Conference.

Illinois State Superintendent Randy Dunn presented the award, noting Waitkus's 16 years of service, including 10 years as board president. "Brian earned this award by leading by example, including attaining Master Board Member status while missing only two board meetings in 16 years," Dunn said.

"His leadership was instrumental in winning for the district two successful referenda in the late nineties. Local schools and the district itself have excelled under this president."

Waitkus has previously represented the Starved Rock Division as a director of IASB. He is currently the division chairman.

LaSalle ESD 122 includes both a grade school and a junior high school, with a total enrollment of 875 students. The district has won significant awards recently, including the Center on Innovation and Improvement Award from the U.S. Department of Education (2001-Present), and the Spotlight School Award (2005-2006) from the ISBE.

Waitkus expressed surprise when accepting the award: "I knew I had been nominated, but I thought there was no way I would win this award. I thought there are hundreds of board



Brian Waitkus

presidents out there who do an excellent job of leading their local boards and school districts. Well, this award is for all of you."

He thanked his district superintendent, Joan McGuire, school principals, board members, the state board and Dunn, "and, most of all, my wife for her support as she stood by me all those times when I went out the door to attend to board business."

Named after the late state board chairman, Thomas Lay Burroughs, the award was created in 1991 and is presented annually. The criteria are:

- leadership on behalf of improved student learning and educational excellence;
- leadership on behalf of equal educational opportunities; and
- leadership in resolving a crisis.

For hearing dates, times and locations visit: <http://www.state.il.us/calendar/>.

DROPOUTS *from page 10*

prehensive plan to re-enroll out of school students so they can reach their full potential and build successful futures," Ruiz said.

Illinois State Senate President Emil Jones (D-Chicago), who gave the October summit's keynote address, said that the state's plan for education should

include funding for re-enrolling out of school students as well as accelerating the performance of students who are already in school. "Too many students in our state who are eager to re-enroll in school and graduate from high school do not have access to the kind of program they need," Jones said.

NEWS FROM IASB

IASB compiles Web menu for school board candidates

The IASB Web site has always featured materials of likely interest to a school board candidate. Now that information has been sorted and compiled into a menu that should be easy to use. Topics include the election calendar, board secretary duties, information for candidates, election forms, and new board members. Find the menu at <http://www.iasb.com/election07/candidatelinks.htm>.

Board training commercial airs throughout Illinois

An IASB commercial calling attention to the importance of training for new school board members began airing on Nov. 27 and ended on Dec. 16 in rural communities.

Get background information – and listen to the commercial online – at <http://www.iasb.com/radiolist.htm>.

IASB gets two new member school districts for FY 2007

Two non-member districts recently joined IASB. They are **Joppa-Maple Grove USD 38** in the Shawnee Division and **Bannockburn SD 106** in the Lake Division. Dave Love is Field Service Director in Shawnee and Dawn Miller is Field Service Director in the Lake division.

IASB's membership ranks now include 853 school districts (three more than a year ago), meaning there are only 19 Illinois public school districts remaining as non-members.

Help keep IASB member information up to date

IASB is appealing to member school districts to update Association membership records in order to ensure that new members or addresses will be added to the database. Send current information to IASB's Janice Kidd at ext. 1142.

Plan now for 2007 NSBA conference in San Francisco

Organizers say the 2007 NSBA annual convention, set for April 14-17 in San Francisco, will help school leaders learn from their peers, share their own successes, and get energized for the year ahead.

Some programming will be designed specifically for new board members, superintendents, and board support professionals. And the Focus on Education lectures will offer information about issues that can affect the future of public school districts.

General session speakers will include the Honorable Sandra Day O'Connor, the first woman to serve on the United States Supreme Court, and film star Jamie Lee Curtis, who is also the best-selling author of seven books, including *It's Hard to Be Five*.

Special Programs will be offered for board members from urban and rural districts, members with an interest in technology, school attorneys, and guests of attendees. There will be an Executive Job Fair, an Exhibition of School Architecture, and a golf tournament and 5K Run/Walk.

NSBA's conference program also will offer topical program tracks to make it easier to identify the most relevant information. New for 2007 will be a hot topics mini-tracks series to provide in-depth information on the issues people

request.

Information on registration, housing, and more are available from the NSBA Annual Conference home page at <http://www.nsba.org/conference/>.



For more details or to register by phone, call NSBA toll-free at 800/950-6722 and press option "1."



"Well, which will it be?
A huge grant or ..."

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

January 3 – Kaskaskia Governing Committee Meeting, The Depot, Vandalia, 6 p.m.

January 4 – Shawnee Division Winter Governing Meeting, Bennie's Italian Foods, Marion, 6:15 p.m.

January 10 – Professional Advancement Seminar for Current Superintendents, Route 66 Hotel & Conference Center, Springfield, Registration: 9 a.m.; Seminar: 9:30 a.m. - 3 p.m.

January 15 – Martin Luther King, Jr. Birthday

January 29 – DuPage Division Winter Dinner Meeting, Wheaton Warrenville CUSD 200, Wheaton, 6 p.m.

February 12 – Lincoln's Birthday

February 16-17 – IASB Leadership Conference, Hyatt Regency, Chicago

February 17 – IASB Board of Directors' Meeting, Hyatt Regency, Chicago

February 19 – President's Day

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



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