

CAPITOL



By Karen Echeverria, Executive Director

Human progress is neither automatic nor inevitable... Every step toward the goal of justice requires sacrifice, suffering, and struggle; the tireless exertions and passionate concern of dedicated individuals.

---Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

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Issue 1

WELCOME BACK

Welcome back for the first issue of the 2017 Capitol Notes. It's hard for me to believe that this is my 10th year of writing this document! I always look forward to keeping you all informed about what is happening at the Legislature each year.

This session started off with a bang and much drama. Because leadership was focused on dealing with some personnel issues, there were not many committee meetings. We believe the issue has been resolved and Legislature is ready to being their work next week.

The Governor and Education

The Governor has already given his State of the State and State of the Budget address. I was pleased to hear him say that education still remains his priority and that his first funding issue is to assure that the 3rd year of the Career Ladder is funded. As you all know, this is the year that has the biggest fiscal impact so it was good to hear that we have his full support.

Teacher Evaluations

Even though we have the Governor's support, we will still need to do some clean up with legislators related to the recently released teacher evaluation report. We believe that most legislators understand that the report was totally flawed and that it should have been released last summer when the State Department of Education (SDE) received it. However, there are still some that question on whether or not evaluations are being done properly. If you have the opportunity to discuss this issue with your local legislator, we would appreciate it if you would take the time to show them how you do your evaluations and give them some comfort that they are being done appropriately.

Tax Relief

Because Idaho is expected to have about \$130 million left at the end of the fiscal year, we will undoubtedly see several different pieces of legislation related to tax relief. Almost everyone we have talked to indicates that they support some form of tax relief. What that all looks like remains to be seen. As long as they continue to fund education and the tax relief is not harmful to our member districts or charters, we will likely remain neutral on any such legislation.

ISBA'S LEGISLATIVE PHILOSOPHY

For the first time since I began working with ISBA, the Executive Board made a decision to adopt an overarching philosophy related to their legislative platform.

Each year, school districts and charters submit resolutions for discussion and vote by the membership. Many of those resolutions relate to a single topic. Most of the time, the resolutions have funding implications. As such, they would add a new line item to the budget or would place more requirements on districts and charters.

At the same time, and for years, ISBA has supported the concept of local governance, fewer line items, and more flexibility. Our testimony to the Public School Funding Formula Committee supported that concept. We asked that they consider removing line items and sending the dollars to local school districts and allowing them to use it as they see fit.

The philosophy of local governance and adopting several resolutions each year that would require new line items and place more restrictions on school districts are in direct conflict with each other. As such, the ISBA Executive Board adopted the following statement:

The ISBA Executive Board supports the principle of local governance of public schools, the full funding of the career ladder, and the appropriation of operation funds from 2009 up to 2017 adjusted for inflation. Until this has been achieved, the Executive Board will not support any resolution or legislation that would result in any new line items in the State education budget.

We believe this statement will assist us on staying focused on the big issues currently facing school districts. The Executive Board will re-address this statement each year to assure that we are staying current.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS BUDGET

Both Superintendent Ybarra and the Governor have proposed their version of the public education budget. Superintendent Ybarra proposed a 6.1% increase and the Governor proposed a 5.8% increase.

While there were several differences in their proposals, the major differences are as follows:

<u>Superintendent Ybarra</u>	<u>Governor Otter</u>
Increase for Classified Staff	None
Increase in Literacy Proficiency	Proposed \$2 million less
Increase in Academic & College/Career Advisors	Proposed \$3 million more
Increase in Classroom Technology	Proposed \$2 million more
None	Health Insurance Indexed to Inflation \$15 million
3% increase in Operational Funding	None

The most interesting part of the Governor’s budget is the line item for health insurance. Increases in health insurance costs have been an item that we have been discussing for years. As you all know, it is paid for out of operational funds. When you combine the operational funds and the \$15 million in Governor Otter’s budget, his increase in operational funding is actually larger than the 3% proposed in Superintendent Ybarra’s budget.

There are two reasons for removing health insurance from operational funding. First, it will assist us in nailing down the actual cost to school districts and charters all over the State. Right now, that is difficult to do. Secondly, it will give us a line item that we can increase based on the current market each year.

As you all know, operational funding increases have usually been in the 1-3% range. Along with that have been double digit increases in health insurance. By placing health insurance in a single line item, we will have concrete data to show the Legislature about upcoming increases. For instance, if the state increases health insurance for state employees by 5%, then we will see a 5% increase in this line item.

At this point, we don’t know if \$15 million is enough to cover health insurance for all districts and charters. In addition, we don’t know what strings, if any, will be attached to the funding. We will work closely with the Legislature to assure that this is a benefit and not a hindrance.

RULES REVIEW

As always, administrative rules review is the first thing that the committees will tackle. Both the House and Senate already have many rules up for review early this week. Because rules are adopted throughout the year, ISBA staff has already reviewed the rules and provided feedback and comment. In addition, we have participated in several committees that drafted some of the rules. Finally, we have worked with our education partners at the Idaho Association of

School Administrators and the Idaho Education Association. We have no concerns about any of the rules that were adopted this year.

RURAL SUPPORT NETWORK

Rural education centers are a concept that Superintendent Ybarra has been championing for three years. As a reminder, the ISBA membership voted to support this concept if the funding came from the State Department of Education (SDE) budget and not from the public education budget.

The SDE has been working on several versions of this legislation. Early last week, we received the version they plan to move forward. The email that accompanied the draft legislation indicated that the SDE could not guarantee that the funding would come from the SDE budget. In addition, as we always do with legislation drafted by outside entities, we had our attorney review the legislation. Our attorney had numerous legal concerns about the language in the proposed bill.

As such, the Governmental Affairs Committee voted to not support the legislation in its current form. I notified the SDE of ISBA's position and offered to meet with them to craft legislation that we could support.

This is a difficult position because the ISBA membership obviously believes the concept is a good one. However, we need to assure that it will benefit our members and that the funding comes from the SDE budget.

ISBA LEGISLATION BASED ON RESOLUTIONS

Below is our progress on each of the ISBA Resolutions.

Public Notice Alternatives (2016) – Legislation Needed

Status: The Newspaper Association is adamantly opposed to this legislation. We have tried to find some language that they might be able to support but have, thus far, been unsuccessful.

Discussion of Sale of Public Property within Executive Session (2016) – Legislation Needed

Status: We attempted to come to consensus with the Newspaper Association on this issue last year but were unable to do so. We are currently working with some of our partners who are also impacted by this legislation to assure that they are in agreement as well. We remain hopeful that we can draft legislation that will meet everyone's needs.

Optimize the Reimbursement of School-Based Medicaid Program (2016) – Legislation Needed - Legislation

Status: After spending two years trying to work with the Department of Health and Welfare to find a resolution to this issue, we have decided to run legislation. The legislation is drafted and we have secured at least one sponsor. We have some meetings scheduled this week with the Education Committee Chairs to discuss how to proceed once we have a bill number.

Administrators in Districts with Remote Schools (2016) – Legislation Needed

Status: We continue to have discussions with the Senate Education Chair and the main sponsoring school district on this issue. We do not believe the Chair will hear this legislation.

Beyond the Smarter Balanced Assessment Consortium Test (2016) – Work with the State Department of Education and the State Board of Education

Status: We continue to work with the State Department of Education and the State Board of Education to assure that we are involved in discussions with any next steps when it comes to statewide student testing.

Information on Past Job Performance Requirements (2016) – Held at the request of the sponsoring school district

Status: The sponsoring school district (Moscow), has asked us to hold off on legislation.

Retention of Retired Teachers (2017) – SBOE is drafting legislation

Status: The State Board of Education has drafted legislation that will allow school districts to rehire teachers who have retired at the age of 60 rather than the current age of 62. Once this legislation comes before the committees, we will stand in support of this legislation.

Funding School Construction (2017) – Legislation Needed

Status: The sponsoring district is working with their local legislator in hopes of drafting some legislation to address this issue. There are several ways to address it but most would include a tax increase.

Reducing the Supermajority for School District Bonds (2017) – Legislation Needed

Status: We are currently seeking sponsors for this legislation. It is a constitutional amendment so would take 2/3 of the House and 2/3 of the Senate to approve it. At that time, it would go on the ballot for the citizens to determine if this is good public policy.

Reduce the 2/3 Majority Vote Requirement to go into Executive Session – Legislation Needed

Status: This legislation is drafted. We are working with the school district to find a sponsor for the bill.

Opposition to Amending Article IX Section V of the Idaho Constitution (Blaine Amendment)

Status: This resolution requires ISBA to oppose any legislation that would ask for an amendment to the constitution that would allow public funds to flow to private and parochial schools. It is still early in the year and we have not heard whether or not any legislator will bring legislation forward on this issue.

Salary Based Apportionment for Classified Employees – Legislation Needed

Status: There are many ways to address an increase in funding for classified staff. That could include changing the factor or simply increasing the total dollars in this line item. Because of the significant amount that will likely be placed in teacher's salaries this year, we may need to wait until next year before we begin addressing this issue.

REMINDERS

Day on the Hill is scheduled for February 20-21 and the Grove Hotel. If you have not already registered or made hotel reservations, we encourage you to do so soon. This is your opportunity to meet one on one with your local legislators to discuss issues that are of importance to your local district or charter school.

Day on the Hill will begin with a key note speech from Lt. Governor Brad Little. We will meet with the Senate and House Committees. Breakfast and lunch on Tuesday is also provided.

Finally, there will be two additional workshops held on Tuesday afternoon. You can choose from: 1) How ISEE Reporting Affects Public School Funding; or 2) What is Your Role in Public School Finance.

STAY TUNED

You can view any bills that are moving through the Legislature at the following link:

<https://legislature.idaho.gov/sessioninfo/2017/legislation/>

If you want to listen in to committee meetings or watch debate in JFAC or on the floor of either chamber, that link can be found at:

<http://idahoptv.org/insession/leg.cfm>

