

NOTES

A WEEKLY PUBLICATION OF THE IDAHO SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION • IDAHO LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Welcome to the fourth issue of Capitol Notes, ISBA's weekly newsletter updating school leaders on the Idaho Legislature.

Finally, we have had some action at the Idaho Statehouse! Let's jump right into what you need to know!

ISBA Bill Tracker

ISBA is currently tracking **nine** bills impacting Idaho public education. The complete bill tracker includes detailed information and ISBA staff analysis regarding the bills.

[CLICK HERE TO VIEW THE ISBA BILL TRACKER](#)

What's Happening at the Capitol

The School Choice Debate

Senate Bill 1038 was introduced – which would create “Freedom in Education Savings Accounts” – in other words it creates the ESA voucher program we’ve been hearing about for months. The bill, in essence, allows any person to qualify for an account that would fund 80% of the “average ADA” of public school students – they estimate roughly \$5,950. These funds can be used for almost everything covered by the Empowering Parents grants, but they can also be used for private school tuition, uniforms, and also (seemingly) for the recipient to pay them self to homeschool their children. The estimated the fiscal note for this legislation is \$20 million; but we know that in other states with universal ESAs, that is significantly underestimated and only accounts for who they believe will “leave” the public school system. It does not include the costs for students who are already private or homeschool educated. Arizona and Wisconsin’s Universal ESA Program costs between \$300 and \$500 million dollars per year.

Similarly, **Senate Joint Resolution 102** was introduced, which is a proposal to remove Article IX, Section V of the Idaho Constitution – more commonly known as either the “no-aid” or “Blaine Amendment.” This clause prevents the state from funneling state dollars to private religious schools.

This will be the fight of the session, and legislators need to hear from their local school leaders. If the door opens to Idaho funding private religious schools we will essentially fund a parallel system of schools that are not accountable or transparent in the way public schools are required to be. But Idaho has the ability

to learn from the many other states who have opened the door to funding private and religious schools. They've all **seen massive property tax increases, defunded rural schools**, and failed to **improve student performance**. In those states, an overall majority of students who received the ESA Voucher had NO prior enrollment in public schools; that is, the vouchers mostly **subsidize wealthy families who are already paying private school tuition**.

CONTACT MEMBERS OF THE SENATE

Contact members of the Senate TODAY – and ask them to vote no on SB 1038 and SJR 102. A hearing should happen sometime in the next week or two – don't delay!

Save Our Schools Idaho - a non-profit partner made up of current and retired school leaders – has launched a website to educate the public about the threat of ESA Vouchers. Their site has excellent links, talking points, and a tool to learn about the threat vouchers pose at the local level. Please share within your circles: **Save Our Schools Idaho**



What's Happening with Election Dates for School Districts?

Two separate bills were introduced this week that would take away the March and August election dates for school districts – House Bill 58 and House Bill 79. When Idaho consolidated elections in 2008, schools were promised they would have four dates per year on which they could hold elections and that there would be an amendment of the supermajority for bonds. Not only has there never been a meaningful attempt to lower the supermajority – which would require a constitutional amendment – there has been no other serious attempt to fix Idaho's school facility funding problem. **Read about each proposal below, and contact your House members.**

HB58 (Rep. Joe Alfieri – R, Coeur d'Alene) – which removes the March and August Date – is in House State Affairs.

HB79 (Rep. Mike Moyle – R, Star) – is a property tax relief bill that intends to pay down voter-approved bonds and levies and rolls over any extra funds to a "facilities fund" – a concept we appreciate. However, it also takes \$50 million away from the \$330 million allocated to public schools from the September 1 special session which means it's **essentially supplanting the Governor's plan to provide more operational funds**. It would also take away our ability to fund **future** facilities. We're finding a way to negotiate with Speaker Moyle and find a path forward. This bill is in House Revenue & Taxation.

CONTACT MEMBERS OF THE HOUSE

In The News

- The Idaho Capitol Sun discusses records that show powerful, wealthy funders outside Idaho back the school choice campaign. [To view the article, click here.](#)
- IBE President and CEO, Rod Gramer, writes about Wisconsin, the first state to pass modern taxpayer-supported subsidies for private and religious schools and

the lessons Idaho lawmakers can learn from it. [To view the article, click here.](#)

Advocacy Opportunity - Register Now!



February 20 - 21, 2023 | Boise, Idaho

[Register Here!](#)

ISBA Day on the Hill

This year's Day on the Hill will include:

- School board hot topics workshop
- Message training on current legislative issues
- Networking with fellow school board members
- A panel featuring Idaho's education stakeholders
- Senate and House Education Committee presentations
- Breakfast speakers on bipartisan approaches to policy making
- Legislative proceedings and a chance to meet with legislators
- The opportunity to have lunch with your legislator

How to Keep Up

You can find committee agendas, reading calendars, legislator information, and more by visiting the [Idaho State Legislature Website](#).

You can find live video coverage and footage of the 2023 Legislative Session by visiting the [Idaho Public Television - Idaho in Session site](#).

To view previous editions of ISBA's 2023 Capitol Notes, [click here](#).

Who is representing ISBA at the Capitol?



Misty Swanson
Executive Director



Quinn Perry
Deputy Director &
Government Affairs



Katie Drum
Communications &
Program Associate

You may have new legislators! Learn who they are and how to contact them by visiting the [Idaho Legislature website](#).



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