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e-Dition

Grassroots Advocacy at Work!

by Terry E. Spradlin, ISBA Executive Director (tspradlin@isba-ind.org)

A primary goal of the ISBA 2018-2021 strategic plan is to “take ISBA Advocacy to the next level.” In the fall ISBA launched its new Legislative Action Network (LAN) and provided an advocacy guide and training to support school board legislative liaisons. The board legislative liaisons have worked effectively to set up legislative forums to engage area legislators, attend “third house” meetings, and to inform their school communities on key legislative activities. In addition, all school board members continue to receive ISBA weekly legislative updates, call-to-action alerts, and invitations to participate in the ISBA Live Legislative Update webinars transpiring on the last Thursday of each month of session. ISBA members’ efforts to participate in the enhanced grassroots advocacy program are paying dividends with impacting legislative outcomes.

One keystone component of fulfilling this goal area of the strategic plan was to host an annual legislative luncheon. Thank you to the many school board legislative liaisons that attended the **First Annual ISBA State House Day** on Tuesday, February 19th. We had a very good turnout of board members, and we were also joined during the day by approximately 25 legislators. A highlight of the day was the legislator panel with Senator

Rod Bray, President Pro Tempore of the Senate; Rep. Bob Behning, Chairman of the House Education Committee; and Rep. Ed Delaney, a Democrat leader on the House Ways & Means Committee and House Education Committee. Members had an excellent chance to dialogue via a Q&A session with these leaders. In addition, ISBA was recognized that afternoon for its 70th anniversary via a concurrent resolution read on the floor of the House and Senate. We thank Senator Jeff Raatz and Representative Bob Behning for authoring and sponsoring the resolution.

Thank you to those of you who are closely tracking the weekly updates and responding to the call-to-action alerts on key bills. As a result of the groundswell of grassroots advocacy by school board members—and superintendents, school business officials, principals, and teachers—we have been able to achieve defeats or major modifications of SB 128 (state-mandated start date of the school calendar), SB 342 (repeal of the state’s child labor laws), and on Tuesday the substantial victory in killing SB 246 (restriction of local public questions to a general or municipal general election only).

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Sen. Raatz speaks on the floor of the Indiana State Senate, introducing Senate Concurrent Resolution 30, which recognizes and celebrates ISBA on its 70th anniversary!

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Ongoing advocacy in support of K-12 public education has been productive, too. House Bill 1001, state budget, passed out of the House of Representatives on Monday by a 65-33 vote. This bill now moves to the Senate, where further adjustments or fine tuning of the budget will occur. There have been some "wins" included in HB 1001. Here is a summary of key K-12 education funding components:

- **A total of \$611 million in "new dollars" for K-12 education over the biennium;**
- **Increases K-12 tuition support by \$461 million over the biennium:**
 - FY '20 appropriation increased by \$150 million or **2.1% compared to FY '19;**
 - FY '21 appropriation increased by \$311 million or **2.2% vs FY '20;**
- **The Foundation Grant** amount will be \$5,442 per pupil for FY '20 and \$5,549 per pupil for FY '21. The Foundation increase will be 1.7% for the first year and 2.0% for the second year;
- **Appropriates \$150 million to pay off the Post-1996 TRF unfunded liability**, to then "free up" approximately \$140 million over the next biennium in Education Fund monies of school corporations (that is recommended to be spent on teacher pay raises);
- **The Teacher Appreciation Grant** of \$30 million each year will continue for the next two years;
- For the purposes of ADM and tuition support, moves the **kindergarten cut-off date** for children to turn five from August 1 to September 1 in FY '20, and then from September 1 to October 1 in FY '21; this is a provision strongly supported by ISBA;
- Increases the **Indiana Secured Schools Grant** by \$5 million per year; this is a provision strongly supported by ISBA;
- Increases **ELL funding in the Non-English Speaking program** by \$2.6 million per year; this is a provision strongly supported by ISBA.

Overall, the tuition support formula funding levels included in HB 1001 remain below the current inflation rate of 2.5%, and below the 3% requested by Dr. Jennifer McCormick State Superintendent of Public Instruction. This is the K-12 public education community's highest priority of the session and we must continue to speak about this funding objective with area legislators. Presently Indiana ranks 36th in the nation for per pupil spending, nearly \$2,000 per student below the national average according to a 2018 National Center for Education Statistics report. Indiana must elevate its standing to ensure adequate funding for optimal educational opportunities to more than 1 million K-12 Hoosier students.

Thank you for the high level of grassroots advocacy engagement so far this session. Let's keep fighting the good fight and remain persistent this legislative session in pursuing our collective goals in support of K-12 public education!

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