



## Gratitude and Persistence

*Thanking those who've helped us this past legislative session*

At our Legislative Update Blog ([wasblegupdate.wordpress.com](http://wasblegupdate.wordpress.com)), we post advocacy tips for school board members every month. Recently we focused on utilizing “Persistence and Gratitude” in our advocacy efforts with lawmakers. The idea being that school board advocates who take the time to follow-up — to demonstrate their ongoing commitment not only to the policy issues at hand, but to building a long-term and genuine relationship with their lawmakers — will have far more success than those who ask once and never ask again.

A great way to do that is by showing gratitude to legislators for authoring bills that are positive for public education. As a board member, think about all the tough decisions you make and how much you appreciate it when a constituent offers thanks. Legislators feel the same way. Close the loop and let them know you're paying attention to what they do.

### ■ GRATITUDE: WASB-Supported Bills Enacted into Law

We are going to follow our own advice in this Capitol Watch and start by showing gratitude to legislators who authored bills that were supported by the WASB and were enacted into law this session. Please

take a moment to drop your legislator an email or call thanking them for supporting one or more of these bills that are helpful for your school district (especially if they are one of the authors of the bill). A voice vote means it essentially passed unanimously.

**Sales and Use Tax Exemption (Act 126)** — The WASB thanks state Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) for authoring this legislation and successfully shepherding it through the legislative process with strong bipartisan support. Under this act, the purchase of building materials by a contractor that are used in a school, local government, or non-profit facility in this state is exempt from the sales and use tax. The bill passed the Senate on a 32-0 vote and the Assembly on a voice vote.

**School Board Members as Volunteer Coaches (Act 92)** — The WASB thanks Tomah school board member Nancy McCoy for being the driving force behind this legislation. We would also like to thank Sen. Julie Lassa (D-Stevens Point) and Rep. Nancy VanderMeer (R-Tomah) for authoring this bill. This act allows a school board member to serve as a volunteer coach or extra-curricular activity supervisor. The bill passed the Senate 29-2 and the Assembly on a voice vote.

**Truancy Notifications (Act 52)** simplifies the process for notifying parents and guardians that their child is habitually truant by allowing first class mail or electronic communications (email, etc.) to be used rather than certified or registered mail. The WASB thanks Rep. Eric Genrich (D-Green Bay) and Sen. Nikiya Harris Dodd (D-Milwaukee) for authoring the bill, which also permits the school attendance officer to simultaneously notify the parent or guardian by an electronic communication. The bill was approved by both houses of the Legislature on a voice vote.

**Mental Health Services in Schools (Act 294)** prohibits the Department of Health Services (DHS) from requiring a mental health clinic or a licensed treatment professional to designate a school site as a clinic office in order to provide outpatient mental health services at the school. It also requires DHS to provide Medical Assistance reimbursement to licensed treatment professionals for mental health services provided at a school, regardless of whether the school site is designated as a clinic office or whether the licensed treatment professional is employed by, a contractor of, or affiliated with a clinic. A big thank you to authors Rep. Joel Kitchens

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## FIND LEGISLATORS AND CANDIDATES

- ▶ **Wisconsin State Legislature** — [legis.wisconsin.gov](http://legis.wisconsin.gov)
  - Find who your state legislators are
  - Get contact information (email, phone, address)
  - See how they voted on bills
- ▶ **Government Accountability Board** — [gab.wi.gov](http://gab.wi.gov)
  - Candidates running for the state Legislature
  - Candidate contact information

(R-Sturgeon Bay) and Sen. Devin LeMahieu (R-Oostburg). The bill was approved by both houses of the Legislature on a voice vote.

**Rural Teacher Loan Program (Act 359)** modifies the state's existing teacher loan program to provide for loan forgiveness to certain teachers employed in school districts in rural counties. The WASB thanks Rep. Romaine Quinn (R-Rice Lake) for working with the WASB on this bill. The bill was passed by the Assembly on a vote of 94-0 and in the Senate on a 31-1 vote. Next session, we'll work on adding more funding to this program.

**CPR Mandate (Act 390)** requires school boards to provide instruction in cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) in any health education course offered to pupils in grades 7 to 12 and to provide instruction about automated external defibrillators to pupils in grades 7 to 12, beginning in the 2017-18 school year. Although the WASB did not support this bill, we are including it here because WASB staff worked with the bill authors and representatives of the American Heart Association (AHA), one of the bill's main backers, to mitigate the financial impact on schools to comply with the mandate. The WASB thanks authors Sen. Jerry Petrowski (R-Marathon) and Rep. John Spiros (R-Marshfield) for listening to our financial concerns and their significant effort to address those concerns.

## ■ PERSISTENCE: Bills That Will Likely Resurface

Here's where some persistence can make the difference. School board member advocacy was a big reason why several high profile bills were defeated this past session. That being said, defeated bills are like zombies. They have a knack for coming back from the dead as new bills and/or getting thrown into the state budget the next session. It will be important in the coming weeks and months to get your legislators and candidates

on record on these issues prior to the election.

With the election season rapidly approaching, half of the state Senate and all Assembly seats will be up for election this fall. It is never too early to plan and get items on legislators/candidates' schedules. Forums are relatively easy to set up (*see sidebar on next page*). The WASB can provide assistance by contacting legislators, drafting invitations, and developing potential questions. Here are some bills you may want to ask about when meeting with legislators and candidates:

**Referenda/Borrowing Restrictions (AB 481)**, introduced by Rep. Michael Schraa (R-Oshkosh) and Sen. DUEY Stroebel (R-Saukville), would have placed restrictions on school district referenda ballot dates and implemented a moratorium on referenda (and other mechanisms for borrowing or raising revenue) following a failed referendum. The WASB strongly opposed this bill because it is anti-local control, did not show trust in locally elected officials and was extremely restrictive and inflexible for school boards. Thanks to our members responding to WASB alerts, contacting their lawmakers and testifying at hearings, this bill died in committee. However, some lawmakers have indicated they want to restrict referenda dates for all local units of government next session.

**Firearms on School Grounds (AB 846)**, authored by Rep. Rob Brooks (R-Saukville), would have permitted a person who has a license to carry a concealed weapon to possess a firearm on the grounds of a school and in a building on the grounds of a school where instruction is provided unless the school board posts signs at all entrances. Under current state law, concealed carry licensees may not carry firearms in or on school grounds. The WASB opposed this bill based on a resolution adopted by the Delegate Assembly and it died in committee.

## The 2015-16 Legislative Session by the Numbers

Session began January 3, 2015  
and ended March 15, 2016

**1,830** bills introduced

**392** bills enacted into law

WASB monitored **118** bills;  
took a formal position on **79**  
bills (For/Against/Neutral)

Supported **38** bills; **23** of  
those were enacted into law

Opposed **19** bills; only **3** were  
enacted into law

**60.5%** of the bills WASB  
supported became law

**84%** of the bills we opposed  
did not become law

**Energy Efficiency Revenue Limit Exemptions (SB 337)** would have ended the revenue limit exemption for school energy efficiency projects. Authored by Sen. Frank Lasee (R-De Pere) and Rep. Adam Neylon (R-Pewaukee), this bill will likely resurface next session as evidenced by a recent Wisconsin Taxpayer Alliance report and media coverage regarding the increase in schools utilizing this exemption and the property tax impact.

**Crime Reporting Mandate (AB 517)** would have imposed a statewide mandate on high schools to report certain crime-related incidents to the Department of Public Instruction (DPI). The bill, authored by Rep. John Jagler (R-Watertown), placed the responsibility for reporting these

incidents on school officials rather than on law enforcement agencies that have these statistics and it provided no additional funding for school districts to cover these additional costs and responsibilities. The bill was passed by the Assembly on a voice vote but died in committee in the Senate. It was scheduled for a vote in the Senate Education Committee but was pulled from the agenda after concerns were raised by the WASB and others.

**School Changing Rooms (AB 469)** would have instituted a state mandate regulating the use of restrooms and locker rooms by pupils. Authored by Rep. Jesse Kremer (R-Kewaskum) and Sen. Steve Nass (R-Whitewater), this bill would have also included a com-

plaint process and allowed parents to sue the school district for money damages or other remedies that are largely undefined in the bill. The WASB opposed this bill because we believe that it is generally better that these types of decisions are handled at the local level by people who are familiar with the individual situations and community values. A number of Wisconsin school districts have done just that through local school board policy-making. The WASB was also concerned about the lack of precedent for or clarity in the lawsuit provision. With new federal guidance being issued and a new president being elected this fall, this issue will certainly continue to be relevant. Rep. Kremer has indicated he will be bringing the proposal back next session, possibly expanded to other units of government. ■

## 10 STEPS TO A SUCCESSFUL LEGISLATIVE/CANDIDATE FORUM

*A more detailed look at setting up forums can be found in the WASB Advocacy Toolkit on our website, [wasb.org](http://wasb.org).*

### 1. Determine whom to invite

Legislative and school district boundaries typically lend themselves to determining which legislators and/or candidates to invite. Consider partnering with other districts who share legislators in common to help boost interest.

### 2. Decide on a format

If the attendance is expected to be relatively small or you are inviting just one legislator/candidate, you may want to hold a roundtable meeting to foster a conversation between all of the participants. If the attendance is expected to be larger with multiple legislators/candidates, a more structured forum may be appropriate.

### 3. Select a date, time and site

Work with legislators/candidates to pick a location and date that works with everyone involved.

### 4. Establish ground rules

During the forum, consistency and fairness are essential to a successful forum and give each legislator/candidate an equal opportunity to communicate his/her message. You may also want to require that audience questions be written in advance so that your moderator can screen them.

### 5. Send the invitations

Send each legislator/candidate, school board member and administrator a written invitation four to six weeks in advance. Include the program format and ground rules.

### 6. Notify the media

Inform the local media about the forum as well as any parent, teacher and other civic groups who may be interested in attending.

### 7. Recruit a speaker, moderator and timer

You will need one person from the host school district to open the forum, introduce the legislators/candidates and moderator, and make the closing announcements. A time-keeper will be needed if you expect legislators/candidates to stick to specific limits. Sometimes local newscasters are willing to serve as moderator. This can boost attendance and credibility.

### 8. Finalize the logistics

Depending upon the format, you may want to provide a podium or head table, microphones and water for the speakers.

### 9. Take notes

During the forum, make note of the legislators'/candidates' positions and any commitments they provide. This will be useful in future communications and allow you to better hold them accountable for their votes.

### 10. Follow up

Send thank you letters to the participating legislators/candidates, any school district staff who assisted in making the arrangements, the moderator, timer, and any other volunteers. Then, make plans for your next legislative forum.