

2017-18 Legislative Session Wrap-up



The state Legislature has concluded its business for the 2017-18 legislative session.

All in all, it was a very positive session for K-12 public education in Wisconsin, which saw the addition of more than \$740 million in funding for public schools over the two-year state budget cycle, with the inclusion of the school safety funds.

Let's look back on the major proposals dealing with K-12 education that were signed into law.

2017-19 State Budget

- Increases **per-pupil categorical aid** by \$200 in 2017-18 and an additional \$204 in 2018-19.
- Fully funds the **sparsity aid program** under current eligibility criteria and adds a feature whereby a district that qualified for sparsity aid in one year but did not qualify the following year would receive 50 percent of its prior year allocation.
- Increases funding for the **high-cost pupil transportation aid** program by \$5.2 million per year, expands eligibility and adds a feature whereby if a previously qualifying district becomes ineligible for aid, the district would receive an amount equal to 50 percent of its prior year allocation.

- Limits when **school district referenda** can be held to only on regularly scheduled election days (spring and partisan primary and general election dates) and limits school districts to two referenda questions per year.

- Ends the ability of school districts to utilize the **energy efficiency revenue limit exemption**.

- Increases the family income eligibility limits for entry into the **statewide voucher program** from 185 percent of the federal poverty level to 220 percent of the federal poverty level.

Low-Revenue Ceiling/ Sparsity Aid

- Increases the **low-revenue ceiling** from \$9,100 per pupil to \$9,400 per pupil, beginning in the 2018-19 school year, and increases the low-revenue ceiling by \$100 per pupil each school year thereafter until it reaches \$9,800 per pupil in the 2022-23 school year.
- Increases the payments to each school district eligible for **sparsity aid** from \$300 per pupil to \$400 per pupil, beginning in the 2018-19 school year.

School Safety Grants

- Creates a \$100 million grant

program for school safety-related expenditures, including facility upgrades and staff training. The package also includes new requirements for school safety plans and reporting to law enforcement by school staff who hear students make threats of violence in or targeted at a school.

Summer School Funding

- Expands the online summer or interim session classes that qualify for state aid to include classes the school board determines fulfill either the statutory graduation requirement in health education or its own requirements for graduation.

Narcan in Schools

- Protects certain school employees from civil liability for administering an opioid antidote (Narcan) in an emergency.

Prohibiting Aiding and Abetting Sexual Abuse

- Specifies in state law that it is immoral conduct for a DPI licensee to assist a school employee, contractor, or agent to obtain a new job in a school or school district if the licensee knows or has reason to believe

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that the person committed a sex offense against a student or a minor.

■ **Nomination Papers and 2nd Class Cities**

- Restores local control over the signature requirement for the nomination of candidates to the school board in school districts that contain territory lying within a 2nd class city.

■ **Board Member Salary Refusal**

- Authorizes a school board member or school board member-elect to refuse the position's salary without a tax penalty.

■ **TB Screening for School District Employees**

- Maintains requirement for a physical exam, but requires only the completion of a tuberculosis (TB) screening questionnaire instead of a chest x-ray or TB test conducted by a physician as a condition of school district employment.

Bills that failed to pass this legislative session included more referendum restrictions, electronic publication of school board meeting proceedings, local control of the school start date, voucher transparency, the so-called “teacher protection act,” and a competitive bidding mandate among others. See the WASB Legislative Update blog for more information.

Altogether, the WASB Government Relations Team registered in support of 58 bills, in opposition to 23 bills, and as neutral or monitoring for 10 bills. ■

How does the WASB take a position on bills?

The simple answer is positions taken by the WASB are determined by our member school boards.

This is accomplished through a member-driven process that ultimately results in resolutions adopted by the WASB Delegate Assembly each January at the State Education Convention.

These adopted resolutions form the official positions of the WASB and guide the development of our Legislative Agenda. Adopted resolutions are in effect for perpetuity unless amended or repealed and are compiled in the Resolutions Book, which is updated annually.

■ **Resolutions Process**

- The process begins with individual member school boards submitting their recommendations to the WASB in the form of board resolutions. The deadline for boards to submit their proposed resolutions is the preceding September 15.
- These member suggestions are then reviewed and considered by the Policy and Resolutions Committee which is appointed annually and comprised of a least one school board member from each WASB region and from each type of school district (*i.e.*, common, unified, K-8 and UHS) operating in the state.
 - The committee meets twice in the fall and, in addition to member board submissions, may consider issues based on current events or brought forward by committee members. The committee recommends which resolutions will be brought before the Delegate Assembly.
 - The final decision on resolutions rests with the Delegate Assembly, which is comprised of one representative from each WASB member school board and CESA board of control. It meets annually in January at the State Education Convention where resolutions are approved or rejected by a majority vote of the delegates present.
 - There is also a procedure to allow “emergency resolutions” that deal with a concern that arises between Nov. 1 and the time of the Delegate Assembly and could not have been presented earlier due to the emergency nature of the subject to be considered during the Delegate Assembly.
 - An “emergency resolution” must be presented to the Policy and Resolutions Committee at its meeting the night before the Delegate Assembly by an active member or by the WASB Board of Directors. If it is recommended by that committee for presentation to the Delegate Assembly the following day and two-thirds of the Delegates vote to consider the resolution, the emergency resolution is debated by delegates.

Your board can help to shape the WASB's policy positions by offering a proposed resolution. Begin by reviewing the existing resolutions in the Resolutions Book. Are the existing resolutions silent on a particular issue? Can you identify resolutions that need to be updated or repealed? Your board can adopt and submit a resolution to address whatever the concern may be to start our member-driven process. □