

Legislative News

March 27, 2006

EDUCATION FUNDING AND REFORM INITIATIVES, INCLUDING PARENTAL INVOLVEMENT, STILL BEING DISCUSSED

While many issues, including the parent involvement policy legislation, have “died” as bills, negotiations continue in the last weeks of the 2006 legislative session. The House is supporting a number of education initiatives, while the Senate is working for additional funding. Some of the reforms may become amendments to funding agreements that are still being discussed. Among the education issues still on the table are:

- * Allowable Growth – The bulk of state funding for education allocated to schools on a “per pupil” basis is referred to as allowable growth. The House passed allowable growth at four percent. The Senate is asking for more. Iowa PTA believes that six percent allowable growth is critical!
- * Professional Development – Providing teachers with the tools they need to engage every student requires professional development outside of instructional time. Like teacher pay, professional development is necessary to ensure that highly qualified personnel are teaching our children.
- * Quality Preschool – Iowa PTA supports public preschool. However, there is a concern that funding this new program will divert dollars from allowable growth which is critical for K-12 education in Iowa.
- * Parental Involvement – Several bills dealt with parent involvement, including the parent involvement policy bill supported by PTA. There are also bills requiring parental notification for students reading below grade level, for standardized achievement tests, and for model core curriculum plans for students. Iowa PTA supports parental involvement and efforts to inform parents of their child’s educational progress.

- * State Standards – This legislation would create a task force to consider statewide content and performance standards. Iowa PTA supports parent representation on education committees and task forces.
- * Other education reforms such as a minimum number of hours (instead of days) of instruction in the school year and allowing four-year-old kindergarteners may also be part of the negotiations in education funding and reform.

AFTER-SCHOOL FUNDING

Funding for afterschool programs is still alive in the legislature. A couple of different bills are being considered. Let YOUR senator and representative know that you support funding for after-school programs.

HEALTHY CHILDREN TASK FORCE

Legislation to create a Healthy Children Task Force may become a resolution rather than a bill, but there is support for this important issue. Resolutions are not subject to the “funnel date” deadlines that kill many bills

TEACHER PAY

HF2760 raises teacher salary minimums by \$1,000 and includes a \$1,000 stipend for secondary math and science teachers in specified subjects. The bill is on the House Calendar. Iowa ranks 41st or 42nd in the nation in teacher pay (depending upon the criterion used in the ranking). Iowa MUST attract and retain quality teachers in order to provide the best education for our children.

CONTINUE TO CONTACT YOUR REPRESENTATIVES ABOUT THESE IMPORTANT ISSUES!!

NEW FEDERAL LEGISLATION NEEDS YOUR SUPPORT!!

The Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act will be introduced by Senators Harkin, Specter and Murkowski and Representatives Woolsey and Shay. This legislation will provide children with nutritious food and beverage choices at school, model healthy choices, reinforce nutrition education, and support parents' ability to feed their children a healthy diet.

While national standards for the school lunch and breakfast programs are updated periodically in accordance with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, nutrition standards for foods sold outside of school meals are not. Because these standards are over 30 years old, they are out of sync with current science and with current concerns about children's diets and health. As a result, while children receive sound nutrition from federally-reimbursed school meals, foods such as soft drinks, candy, and fried snack foods are readily available at school, undermining child health and wasting taxpayer dollars invested in the federal school meal programs.

TAKE ACTION TODAY!

Let your U.S. senators and representative know that you support the Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act.

Send an email message to Senators Harkin and Grassley and to your U. S. Representative from the National PTA website at:

<http://capwiz.com/npta2/issues/alert/?alertid=8610861&type=CO>

National PTA has a sample letter already written. You are encouraged to include your school's or family's personal story. Capwiz will automatically send a message to your own senators and representative. You must include your contact information so that congressmen will know you are a constituent.

WRITING TO YOUR LEGISLATORS

During the legislative session, address mail to Iowa Legislators at:

The Honorable (full name of legislator)
Iowa House of Representatives (or Iowa Senate)
State Capitol
Des Moines, IA 50319

Use the correct salutation:

Dear Representative (last name),
Or
Dear Senator (last name),

CALLING YOUR LEGISLATORS

Leave a message for your Representative in the House by calling (515) 281-3221

Leave a message for your Senator by calling (515) 281-3371

E-MAILING YOUR LEGISLATORS

You MUST include your home address in your email, so they know you are a constituent!

Email addresses are created as follows:

firstname.lastname@legis.state.ia.us

DON'T KNOW WHO YOUR LEGISLATORS ARE?

Go to: <http://www.legis.state.ia.us/FindLeg/>

TIPS ON COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS:

http://www.iowapta.org/pdf/legislative/Advocating_to_Lawmakers.pdf

NATIONAL PTA LEGISLATIVE NEWS

To receive National PTA's weekly e-newsletter, "This Week in Washington", go to:
capwiz.com/npta2/mlm/signup

For information on National PTA issues, go to:
http://www.pta.org/ia_issues.html

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Thank you for being an advocate for children!