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Legislative News

March 9, 2006

**** URGENT ACTION NEEDED ****

PARENT INVOLVEMENT POLICY BILL

Our Parent Involvement Policy bill (HF2239) passed the full House yesterday by a vote of 69-29. We are extremely pleased that the bill passed with the original language intact. Amendments to alter the bill were withdrawn or defeated. The bill will now be sent to the Senate Education Committee.

HF2239 MUST BE PASSED BY THE SENATE EDUCATION COMMITTEE BY THE MARCH 24 "FUNNEL DATE." PLEASE CONTACT YOUR SENATOR IMMEDIATELY!!

The March 24 "funnel date" means that bills from the House must clear their committee in the Senate, and bills from the Senate must clear their committee in the House. If you have plans to leave for spring break, please contact your senator BEFORE YOU LEAVE FOR SPRING BREAK!!

DON'T KNOW WHO YOUR SENATOR IS?

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

The responsibility of PTA members as advocates for children and schools is to inform legislators of the facts surrounding various issues. No one is an expert in every subject. PTA is the expert in parent involvement! Following are "talking points" you may use when communicating with your senator:

* The parent involvement policy in HF2239 is based on the extensive research of Dr. Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University. The language comes from National PTA's National Standards for Parent/Family Involvement Programs that have been endorsed by nearly 100 education, health, and parent involvement groups and are included in the federal definition of parent involvement in the No Child Left Behind Act.

* More than 35 years of research has proven beyond dispute the positive connection between parent involvement and student success. Research also shows that parent involvement has a positive effect on student behavior.

* Effectively engaging parents and families in education can have profound benefits for students, parents, teachers, and overall school quality.

For students:

- Higher grades, test scores, and graduation rates
- Better school attendance
- Greater enrollment in postsecondary education

For teachers and administrators:

- Greater morale
- Increased teacher effectiveness
- Greater job satisfaction

For parents:

- Improved communication with teachers
- Increased education skills
- Improved attitude toward the school

* Research has shown that when parents are involved, students exhibit more positive attitudes and behavior.

* When students report feeling support from both home and school, they have more self-confidence, feel school is more important, and they tend to do better in school.

* Student behaviors such as alcohol use, violence, and other antisocial behaviors decrease as parent involvement increases.

CALL YOUR SENATOR TODAY!

Call your Senator at 515-281-3371.

If you are able to reach your Senator by phone, ask him/her to support HF2239 – the Parent Involvement Policy bill from the House. If you get voice mail, leave the same message and tell your Senator that you are from their district. Leave your address and phone number.

EMAIL YOUR SENATOR TODAY!

firstname.lastname@legis.state.ia.us

Use the talking points above to urge his/her support for HF2239 – the Parent Involvement Policy bill from the House.

ALSO CONTACT THE SENATE EDUCATION CHAIRMEN:

Senator Connolly mike.connolly@legis.state.ia.us

Senator McKinley paul.mckinley@legis.state.ia.us

BEFORE- AND AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS

THANKS to all of you who contacted representatives last week about after-school programs. Keep up the good work! A bill has made it out of the House Appropriations Committee but still needs to be debated in the full house. Advocates will also be working with the Senate to help them understand the need Iowa has for affordable, quality before- and after-school programs. Watch for more information very soon.

Iowa PTA urges the legislature to assist communities in funding quality, affordable before- and after-school programs.

FUNDING FOR EDUCATION

Allowable growth refers to the increase in the cost per student that is set by the legislature each year. It is based on a formula that includes state money and local property taxes. Funds are distributed to school districts based on the number of students they have enrolled. Iowa schools are struggling!

1981-82 Iowa ranked 17th in the nation in per pupil spending.

1991-92 Iowa ranked in the middle

2001-02 Iowa had slipped to 30th

2004-05 Iowa now ranks 37th

Iowa's teacher pay ranking is now 42nd in the nation (AFT 2005) or 41st (NEA 2005)

(data is from Iowa Association of School Boards, American Legislative Exchange Council and the Institute for Tomorrow's Workforce)

For more information, visit www.myiowaschools.org

Student fees have increased and students are being asked to provide more and more supplies for schools:

Reams of copy/printer paper

Hand sanitizers and soap

Kleenex and paper towels

And the list goes on!

It is critical that the legislature increases funding for schools and ALSO fairly distributes the property tax burden across the state. The House passed an allowable growth rate of 4 percent. The Senate is still considering its recommendation. **Iowa PTA supports at least 6 percent allowable growth for schools.**

Parents are critical in helping legislators understand how this funding situation is affecting our children. **Please contact your legislators and ask them to support 6 percent allowable growth – do it for the children!**

HEALTHY CHILDREN TASK FORCE

A bill (SF2251) in the legislature would require the Department of Education and the Department of Public Health to convene a Healthy Children Task Force to assess current policies and laws affecting the health of children including physical activity, physical education, food and nutrition, and nutrition education. The task force would develop recommendations and issue a report. SF2251 made it out of the Senate Education Committee. It will be debated in the Senate and if approved, must make it out of the House Education Committee by the March 24 “funnel date.” **Iowa PTA supports legislation (SF2251) to form the Healthy Children Task Force.** Please contact your legislators about this important issue!

PUBLIC PRESCHOOL ACCESS

The legislature is considering the governor's proposal to make preschool available to every 4-year old child in Iowa. **The PTA supports public school preschool.** However, this funding should NOT divert resources from financially-strapped school districts.

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

TIPS ON COMMUNICATING WITH LAWMAKERS:

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

National PTA Legislative Information –

- 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

Iowa PTA Legislative Information –

- To subscribe to Iowa PTA “Legislative News”, go to: www.iowapta.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=legislative.network
- To view previous issues of the e-newsletter, go to: www.iowapta.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=updates.main