

Legislative Update
March 12, 2009

Legislative Report - **Your Feedback Needed Now!**

Your feedback and advocacy are urgently needed on two proposals in the Iowa Legislature.

HF 351, originally sponsored by Polly Butka of Clinton but now possibly being led by Roger Wendt, could prohibit school districts from starting school before the 4th Monday in August. Many school districts, including Des Moines, work with parents, teachers and community members to set the start date that best meets their local needs. Educators on the Iowa Association of School Boards are opposed to the proposed mandate. PTA is a strong advocate for parent involvement in children's education. We need to hear your views and to encourage advocacy with your area representatives.

SF 138, sponsored by Senators Johnson and Hancock, is supported by the Public Safety Commission and SafeKids, as well as other child safety groups. This bill requires child restraint systems or seatbelt use by motor vehicle passengers under 18 years of age. There are specific exemptions in some cases.

We want to hear from you about these issues. To give your opinion, to get more information or to request copies of the bills, please e-mail sdbre1987@gmail.com as soon as possible. Your input is valuable and appreciated!

OTHER LEGISLATIVE NEWS

The Iowa House and Senate have debated bills that would impact school enrollment age. There have been four proposals that would increase the legal school drop-out age from 16. One proposal would raise the age to 18; two others would raise the age to 17; one has an exemption for home-schooled students. A number of educators favor an increase to age 17 but schools have also expressed concern about behavior problems and the ability of parents to enforce school attendance.

Another proposal would lower the mandatory school start age from 6 to 5. This perhaps reflects the practice in some schools of providing pre-K classes for five-year-olds who are then able to attend kindergarten at age 6. There does not appear to be a great deal of support for the idea. The Iowa Association of Schools Boards has noted that parents are best able to determine their child's social and emotional readiness for school. PTA is a strong advocate of parent involvement in education. What are your views on these school-age issues? I would welcome your comments on these, or other legislative issues. Please feel free to e-mail me at sdbre1987@gmail.com.

Sincerely,
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