

Attachment 4

INTRODUCTION AND PRIORITIES FOR SENATE EDUCATION

Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee. My name is Jess Harrison and I am the Government Affairs Director for the Idaho School Boards Association. I'd like to introduce my colleagues who are with me today. I'm sure you all know our Executive Director, Karen Echeverria. I'd also like to introduce Misty Swanson, our Deputy Director, who you will be seeing here with us this session.

~~Thank you for inviting us to present today about the legislative priorities that we see for this coming year.~~

The ISBA represents almost 800 locally elected school board trustees and charter school board members. We are still the only state in the nation to allow charter schools full membership in our Association.

That means that charter schools participated during ISBA's Annual Business Session and voted on every resolution. As such, the priorities and positions you will see from us are supported by both traditional schools and charter schools.

For the first time, the ISBA Executive Board, comprised of our region chairs and vice chairs throughout the State, made a decision to adopt an overarching philosophy related to their legislative platform. For years, ISBA has supported the concept of local governance, fewer line items, and more flexibility. Our testimony to the Public School Funding Formula Interim Committee supported that concept. We asked that they consider removing line items and sending the dollars to local school districts and allowing them to use it as they see fit.

As such, the ISBA Executive Board adopted the following statement:

The ISBA Executive Board supports the principle of local governance of public schools, the full funding of the career ladder, and the appropriation of operation funds from 2009 up to 2017 adjusted for inflation. Until this has been achieved, the Executive Board will not support any resolution or legislation that would result in any new line items in the State education budget.

We believe this statement will assist us on staying focused on the big issues currently facing school districts.

Thus, our number one priority for this year is the full funding of the career ladder.

In addition, we will be working on several ^{issues} ~~pieces of legislation~~ all related to resolutions that have passed our membership.

Funding School Construction

We are exploring ways to help schools with the burden of funding facilities outside of the only option currently available to them which is going out to bond. We haven't nailed down exactly what that will look like at this time, but we hope to work throughout the session with the district sponsoring the resolution and the Funding Formula Committee to examine the issues surrounding facility funding.

Reducing the Supermajority Requirement for Bonds

On a related note, we have had a resolution for many, many years to reduce the 2/3rds supermajority requirement for voter approval of bonds. We are only 1 of 2 states in the nation to require such a high threshold which has impacted school districts ability to keep up with growth in student enrollment and the corresponding need for facilities.

Reduce the 2/3 Majority Vote Requirement to go into Executive

Session

Another 2/3rd requirement we are examining is the one required for boards to go into executive session. The way the law reads is that it requires 2/3rds of the governing body. So for 5 member school boards that means 4 members are needed. This has been an issue for districts attempting to fill vacancies and trying to ensure that this requirement can be met for the unique occurrences that school boards deal with such as student expulsions.

Salary Based Apportionment for Classified Employees

This is an ongoing issue for schools. The formula has not been changed in decades and schools now have very specialized classified staff such as IT directors, human resource professionals, and business managers.

The differential between what school districts must pay to get qualified individuals and what they are appropriated by the state is substantial.

There are many ways to address an increase in funding for classified staff. That could include ~~changing the factor or simply increasing the total dollars in this line item.~~ ^{and} We are exploring options for addressing this issue.

As you have heard, most of our priorities this session are in regard to school funding. We are hopeful that the Funding Committee will take a broad look at all issues surrounding school funding.

Thank you ~~again~~ for this opportunity to present the Idaho School Boards Association priorities for this upcoming year.

With that Mr. Chair, I would be glad to stand for any questions.