

June, 2007

PLEASE REPLY TO:

Dear School Board Member:

2921 Baker Drive
Springfield, Illinois
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217/528-9688
Fax: 217/528-2831

Illinois legislators have been more focused than ever on legislation that would provide a significant infusion of revenue to schools across Illinois. However, discussions of additional revenue include implementation of additional programming, audits, ethics and mandated school board member training all under the heading of “accountability”. The program of most concern to your Association in these discussions is any attempt to impose an unfunded mandate requiring school board member training.

One Imperial Place
1 East 22nd Street
Suite 20
Lombard, Illinois
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Your association, the Illinois Association of School Boards supports school board member training. The IASB was created just for that purpose and has been providing exemplary training programs for school board members for 94 years. Your school district, through their participation in the IASB Delegate Assembly, emphasized concern over mandated school board member training in 2005 in response to proposed legislation. We’ve continued to promote this position with legislators on your behalf. However, it’s time for local school board members to act!

OFFICERS
Marie Slater
President

Mark C. Metzger
Vice President

Joseph Alesandrini
Treasurer

The mandated training proposals forwarded this spring have taken the following forms:

Raymond W. Zimmerman
Immediate Past President

HB 1680 (Yarborough, D-Maywood) in the most recent draft amendment would require ethics training through the Regional Superintendent of schools and a mandated orientation within 6 months after election focusing on school law, duties of board membership, financial oversight and ethical behavior of school board members. School board members of districts on the Financial Watch List would be required to have an additional 6 hours of training regarding financial oversight. All training programs would be provided by the State Board of Education or an entity approved by the State Board.

Michael D. Johnson, Ed.D.
Executive Director

HB 1466 (Rita, D-Blue Island) requires a board member training plan.

Metropolitan Mayors Conference Proposal (Ryg, D-Vernon Hills) in the most recent draft amendment requires all school board members to

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complete at least 6 hours of training on their financial oversight, accountability, and fiduciary responsibilities. The training must be completed within a year after election and may be provided by a trainer approved by the State Board of Education.

“Burnham Plan” Proposal, in the most recent draft amendment (and purported to be an amendment to the school funding plan in HB 750), requires all school board members to complete at least 6 hours of training during their first term including education and labor law, financial oversight/accountability and fiduciary responsibilities. Each year thereafter school board members would be required to participate in an additional 6 hours of training. This training would include professional development leadership training in ethics, open meetings laws, public and student records, powers, duties and responsibilities of school officials, standards-based education, growth-model assessment, change theory and data-driven decision-making. The curriculum used for training shall be approved by the State Board of Education and/or approved providers.

Your Representative and Senator need to hear from YOU, their local school board member, regarding these plans. We’ve provided some talking points for you to review and share, however your personal experiences are most persuasive.

As the legislature discusses the fate of education funding proposals through the summer, more and more emphasis will be put on so called “accountability” provisions. It is vital that we get our message out to legislators NOW regarding the problems with singling out school board members for mandated training.

Thank you for your commitment to your students, staff and community through your willingness to serve, unpaid, as a school board member.

For more information and to share the results of discussions with your representative and senator you can reach us via the e-mail addresses or phone numbers listed below. We look forward to your responses.

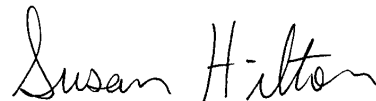
Sincerely,



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How do I find my State Representative and State Senator?

Via the internet:

1. Go to: www.elections.state.il.us
2. Click on the Voting Information box.
3. Click on Find Districts/Officials on the left.
4. Click on Search By Address.
5. Type in your address and click on Search.
6. The listing of elected officials for your address will appear. You may click on the name of your State Representative and then State Senator to get their contact information.

Talking Points on Local School Boardsmanship

June, 2007

- Share with your legislators and your public what your board has embraced regarding effective governance and conduct. For assistance IASB provides a “Foundational Principles of Effective Governance” and “Code of Conduct” for members of school boards that you can obtain from our website or by calling our office.

- ◆ Visit the IASB Website at: www.iasb.com

- Share with your legislators and your public how you and your board get training to be effective as local school board members. This training can take many forms and be provided by many resources, such as: IASB programs, seminars, workshops, meetings and attendance at the IASB/IASA/IASBO Joint Annual Conference; programs and legal workshops provided by school law firms; college course work; and more.
- Share with your legislators and your public the procedures and safeguards that are in place to insure proper receipt and expenditure of funds. This should include but not be limited to: policies your board has adopted, administrative procedures your board has implemented, independent audits your board has been required to file, investment policies your board follows, and many others.
 - ◆ IASB provides policies and administrative procedures under “Section 4 – Operational Services” of the “IASB Policy Reference Manual”
 - ◆ IASB Governmental Relations also has available a listing of *School Board Accountability Laws*.

- Ask **WHY ONLY SCHOOL BOARD MEMBERS?**

The Alliance does not believe that school board members should be treated differently than other elected officials in the State. If school board members are required to receive training to better help them do their jobs, what about county board members, city council members, mayors, and yes, members of the General Assembly. Have there never been instances of wrongdoing or scandal at the county, city, or State level? One argument from proponents of this legislation is that school board members are responsible for millions of taxpayer dollars in the school budget and, therefore, need training in this area. But aren't other elected officials responsible for the same, for example, legislators approving a State budget of over \$50 billion?

- Ask **WHO SHOULD PROVIDE THE TRAINING?**

The Illinois Association of School Boards was created for the purpose of providing training and professional development to school board members. The IASB is created in Article 23 of the School Code – State statute –for the purpose of “the education of school board members as to their duties and responsibilities so as to improve the management of the public schools, through associations of school boards. The activities of any association which complies with this Article are hereby declared to constitute a public purpose.” This is exactly what the IASB has been doing for 94 years. Why would training initiatives put the training of school board members into the hands of the State Board of Education or the Regional Office of Education?

School board members in Illinois are already receiving – voluntarily – training from the IASB. In the 2004-2005 school year, 89% of school districts sent at least one board member to the annual conference to receive training – 73% of districts sent *four or more* board members to the annual conference for training. Plus, 62% of school districts sent board members to receive training at local division meetings.

It is likely that school board members already receive more training and professional development than any other elected official group in the State. And if training becomes mandatory, the IASB should be the designated training and approval entity and not a State agency or regional office. Similar provisions have been offered to the principals, administrators and teachers regarding approval of their training programs where their organizations either have full authority or jointly approve programs and providers.

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- Share what other states do regarding training. In a recent research project, it appears that 18 other states currently require some type of training for local school board members. In these states, the vast majority have designated the state school boards association as the trainer. Half of the states that require training of school board members also *pay school board members* for their service.
- Finally, remind legislators and your public that locally elected school board members are ultimately accountable. Local citizens wield great power in how public education is delivered through the election of their school board members. Through your service on a local school board the “public” in public education is preserved and championed.

YOUR ACTION

Please call your State Representative and Senator! Your legislators’ contact information can be found at: www.ilga.gov . Please keep in mind the following points:

- School board members in Illinois support training – but this is already being done;
- School board training should be done by the state association that was created to provide such training – not by a government bureaucracy;
- School board members should not be singled out for mandatory training – all elected officials should be required to have training under this legislation;
- Is the State going to provide funding for the mandatory training that school board members must receive?
- What action will be taken against the elected school board member that is unable or refuses to participate in the mandated training?

Questions?

Please contact any one of us and we’d be happy to help you! We’d also appreciate any feedback you get from your legislators on the issue. Thank you in advance for taking the time to call your legislators!

School Member
Call to
Action

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Springfield, Illinois 62703-5929

ILLINOIS ASSOCIATION
OF SCHOOL BOARDS



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