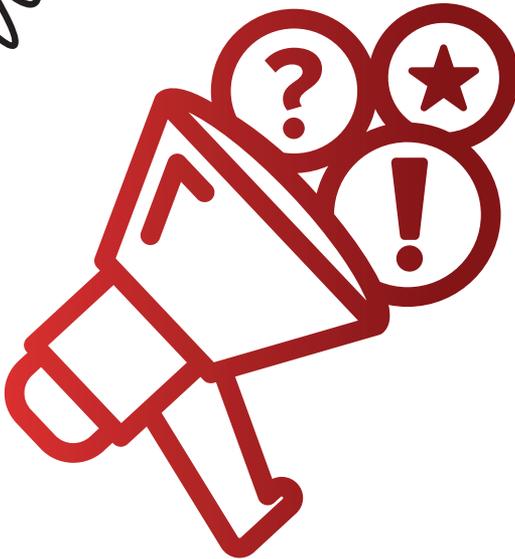




INDIANA SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION

Working Together



Let's Advocate for Public Schools

2026 ADVOCACY GUIDE | 9TH EDITION

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Foreword

School boards in every school corporation in Indiana are charged with the awesome responsibility of making decisions to ensure that the schools are well-managed and budgets are balanced. The quality of education for the more than 1 million students who attend Indiana public schools is largely dependent on how well those decisions are made. Undoubtedly, decisions made by the Indiana General Assembly also significantly impact school corporation governance.

Typically, as many as 200 bills are introduced each session impacting K-12 education with a few dozen or more bills becoming law every year. That is why it is crucial that school board members, now more than ever before, become active and engaged advocates for K-12 public education. If we don't champion public education, who will?

This Advocacy Guide is a resource to help you effectively participate in the grassroots advocacy process. When we stand united, we inform, influence, and shape sound K-12 education policy.

Why Is My Advocacy So Important?

- Because you have firsthand understanding of your school corporation's needs and what is necessary to provide a quality education.
- Because you must deal with the complexities of balancing your local budgets annually.
- Especially now, at a time when social and political challenges confront K-12 public education more than ever before, your voice representing the best interests of Hoosier students must be heard.
- You have an important message to deliver to your state senators and representatives, the media, and your local community.
- You have the clout to inform and influence the development of sound K-12 education policy both in Indianapolis and our nation's capital, Washington, D.C.



Can I Really Make A Difference?

- Absolutely!
- As school board members, you are in an excellent position to educate and influence the legislative process.
- You, like policymakers, are elected and appointed officials and hold positions of influence in your community.
- You deal with a variety of issues at the local level on an ongoing basis and are an informed source of information about K-12 education policy.
- Legislators listen to their constituents back home. You're on the front lines of education and can explain the impact of state-level policy decisions.
- The impact local school leaders can have in the policy-making process is why the Indiana School Boards Association strongly encourages our members to deliver advocacy messages to the legislature.
- ISBA has established a grassroots program, the Legislative Action Network, to keep local school leaders informed and ready to advocate.

“Big 10” Action Checklist

1. Get Informed
2. Identify Your Legislators
3. Contact Your Legislators
4. Follow-up with Your Legislators
5. Share Your Story and Information
6. Invite and Involve the Community
7. Advocate Effectively
8. Come to Indianapolis
9. Follow-up with ISBA
10. Say Thank You and Build the Relationship



Get Informed

The first step in effective advocacy is to get informed. It is important that you, as an advocate, understand the issues and are comfortable with your knowledge of them. For ease of access, the ISBA 2026 Legislative Priorities and Foundational Statements are in Appendix A of this guide.

Thorough preparation will make you a more confident and successful advocate. There are many resources available to help you build your knowledge base. A starting point can be the Legislative Services page of the ISBA website (www.isba-ind.org/legislative-services.html), where you will find a wealth of information:

- ISBA’s Legislative Positions & Priorities
- Bill tracking list of K-12 legislation
- Weekly legislative updates
- Digest of New Laws and Legislator Directory
- How a bill becomes law

The Indiana General Assembly website (iga.in.gov) also provides valuable information:

- Watch legislative hearings and floor action live (or archived)
- Find votes on bills
- Review bills and bill amendments
- Access the session calendar and deadlines
- Research the fiscal impact statements on bills

Contact Your Legislators

By regularly contacting your legislators and developing a relationship with them, you will be able to assist them in making well-informed decisions regarding education. You can use e-mail, write letters, notecards, or make telephone calls. Contact your legislators prior to the legislative session to introduce yourself and begin to develop lines of communication.

You can find your legislators and their contact information by entering your home address on the Indiana General Assembly website at <https://iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/>

When you call during the interim:

- Give your name, title, and the name of the school board on which you serve.
- Don't be surprised if you have to schedule a time to speak with the legislator; remember, most legislators have full-time jobs during the interim.
- Focus your conversation on one or two top priorities, remembering that your immediate goal is to introduce yourself and offer yourself as a resource for the legislator on education issues.
- Share stories about the successes of your school corporation.
- Share the "local perspective" on the impact of state legislation.

When you call during the legislative session:

- Ask to speak with the senator or representative but be prepared to discuss your issue with a legislative assistant.
- Give your name, title, and the name of the school board on which you serve.
- Focus your call on ONE issue or bill and, if possible, identify the bill by number; briefly state what position you want the legislator to take and be prepared to offer your rationale based on local impact.
- Always ask what position your legislator will be taking on the bill or issue.
- Share with the ISBA staff what you learned about legislators' positions on issues.

If you want to call the State House to leave a request for your state representative or senator to vote for or against a bill, you can call the State House call center:

➤ Indiana House of Representatives:

317-232-9600 or 800-382-9842

➤ Indiana Senate:

317-232-9400 or 800-382-9467



Share Your Story and Information

The next step in effective advocacy is to share the information you have gained with your board, your neighbors, and your community. No one is more qualified than you to talk about your school corporation and what is going on within it.

- Formalize legislative advocacy on your board by creating a standing agenda item for legislative updates from your board's legislative liaison during the session. Use this time to update your board and, by extension, your community on issues of legislative importance. Report on your contacts with legislators.
- Work with other local elected officials on common issues.
- Ask to speak to civic and community groups on issues of importance to education. As a school board member, you are a community leader, and you can have great influence on your community's attitudes.
- Use local media to advocate for public education. Talk to the local newspaper's education reporter to help her or him understand what is happening in your school corporation and with educational programs and services in general. Meet with the editorial board to share a vision of the vital role public education plays in your community. Strong relationships with local media representatives mean they know they can rely on you as a resource for education stories.
- Finally, write a guest opinion editorial for the newspaper to convey your message to a broader audience.

Invite and Involve the Community

One effective local activity is arranging opportunities for your school to be highlighted as the center of your community. It is important that we continue to introduce ourselves to our public, including our legislative leaders.

- Invite your legislators and members of the public to visit your schools or to events that highlight successful programs in your district. Arrange for legislators to tour one or more schools to showcase your corporation's achievements and successes. Be sure to call or e-mail media representatives in advance and promptly thank your legislators for coming to the school.
- Host legislative forums in your community or with other school corporations in your county. Invite all of your senators and representatives to a discussion about K-12 education policy and school funding. During the session, Thursday evenings, or Friday or Saturday mornings would work best for when they are back home in their districts.
- One of the hardest activities -- but potentially the most effective -- is building and activating a local coalition focused on public education. You can form a coalition with stakeholder groups in your community. By engaging these stakeholders in the process, you will build understanding and goodwill.

Come to Indianapolis

Culminate your advocacy efforts and help ensure a successful legislative session for issues affecting public education, by visiting Indianapolis and meeting with your legislators.

ISBA will also inform you of opportunities to lend your voice and local expertise to testify on bills in the House and Senate Education Committees. Stay tuned for email blasts in this regard from ISBA during the 2026 session.

Attend the **Eighth Annual ISBA State House Day** on February 17, 2026, at the Hyatt Regency Indianapolis. This event typically includes a briefing session, legislative panels, a luncheon, and State House office visits. More information will be sent to you about this as it is available.

If you cannot attend this event, schedule another time for board members and administration to travel to Indianapolis to meet with your legislators and push for sustained investment in education.



Follow Up with ISBA

Let us know how your conversations go with your legislators!



Terry Spradlin
Executive Director
tspradlin@isba-ind.org
317-639-3588



Lisa Tanselle
General Counsel
ltanselle@isba-ind.org
317-639-4359



Bre'Anna Donaldson
Staff Attorney
bdonaldson@isba-ind.org
317-240-5153

“Top 10” Tips of Effective Lobbying

Tip 1

Research your legislators’ backgrounds, committee assignments and voting records on education issues. Their personal biographies can be found on the House and Senate Caucus pages on Indiana General Assembly website at: iga.in.gov. Click on House or Senate and then Republican or Democrat to then find the bios on your legislators. Learn whether their children or grandchildren attend your schools, as this will establish common ground for support of public education.

Tip 2

Develop relationships with your legislators by routinely visiting, writing and calling; let them know you are a constituent. Take notes about them to assist you with future conversations with them.

Tip 3

Don’t overdo your lobbying. Be brief and know what you are talking about. Use ISBA talking points. Clearly and quickly explain your opposition or support for the issue you are contacting them about.

Tip 4

Show respect. Be positive. Remember to thank legislators for pro-public education votes and support of the ISBA legislative priorities. Conclude each communication with an expression of gratitude for their time.

Tip 5

Lobby with your real-life experience. It’s your most persuasive tool; use local examples.

Tip 6

Set priorities. When everything is important, nothing is important. Know your ‘ask’ and focus your conversation around it.

Tip 7

Shore up lobbying allies from your community to demonstrate broad support; collaborate with others.

Tip 8

Don’t forget the media. Getting your message out to the press – letters-to-the editor, news releases, etc. – can influence your legislators and public opinion.

Tip 9

Be sensitive to partisan politics, but always try to come across as nonpartisan. In politics, there are no permanent allies and no permanent adversaries.

Tip 10

Be reasonable and consider compromise on contentious issues. Remember there are typically more than 1,000 bills that are introduced each session, and everyone thinks their issues are most important —so many people and issues vie for the attention of legislators. Sometimes, simply informing legislators on your position will pay long-term dividends whether you immediately change their position or not.



A Checklist of Quick Communication Tips

- ✓ When calling, ask to speak with the legislator directly, or briefly state your position to the person taking the message.
- ✓ Know local needs and impact of legislation on your school district.
- ✓ Speak up; be heard on issues of concern to you. Your actions and inactions count.
- ✓ Know your issues. Check ISBA's bill tracking list and weekly legislative updates on a frequent basis during the session to keep abreast of legislative news.
- ✓ Follow through with any information promised.
- ✓ Be honest in your approach.
- ✓ Identify and utilize common interest/ issues/activities.
- ✓ Your knowledge of issues and the legislative process produces credibility with your legislator; your credibility dictates your legislator's level of response.
- ✓ Be direct.
 - Make specific requests.
 - Get specific commitments.
 - Follow up: Hold a legislator accountable for his/her commitments.
- ✓ Send hand-written thank you notes or follow-up messages to reiterate key advocacy or discussion points.
- ✓ Make yourself a contact point for your legislator within your district.

Writing Letters-to-the-Editor and Opinion Editorials

Letters-to-the-editor and opinion editorials written by readers (called op-eds) are useful ways to speak out on an issue, respond to an article or editorial, or express your position in your own words. They often are read by members of the Indiana General Assembly and can do double-time as a lobbying tool, as they influence the broader community, too, to build support for pro-K-12 education legislation. Concentrate on writing letters-to-the-editor or op-eds for your local newspaper since that will have the greatest impact on legislators. Even a letter or op-ed that does not get published is valuable because it may be considered by a newspaper's editorial board reviewing an issue, and it may cause the paper to write a story on the topic.

Hints for effective letters-to-the-editor and op-eds:

- Be brief and focus on one issue. If the article is too long, the newspaper may edit out some important facts. To get an idea of how long is too long, take a look at your newspaper's opinions page and count the words in an average letter-to-the-editor. The average op-ed is usually longer than a letter-to-the-editor and is between 450 and 500 words.
- For a letter-to-the-editor, refer to a recent event or an article, which has appeared in the newspaper and include the article's date and title.

- When applicable, close your letter or op-ed by asking readers to contact their members of the General Assembly or other policymakers about the issue.
- Give your address, school corporation and phone number so that the newspaper can verify authorship.
- Send your published letter-to-the-editor or op-ed to your legislators.



State Offices

Mike Braun, Indiana State Governor

State House
200 W. Washington Street, Room 206
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-4567

Micah Beckwith, Lieutenant Governor of Indiana

State House
200 W. Washington Street, Room 333
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-4545

Diego Morales, Secretary of State of Indiana

State House
200 W. Washington Street, Room 201
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-6531

Todd Rokita, Indiana Attorney General

State House
200 W. Washington Street, Room 219
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-6201

Dr. Katie Jenner, Secretary of Education

State House
200 W. Washington Street, Room 228
Indianapolis, IN 46204
317-232-6610

The Honorable (insert name of State Representative)

State Representative, District (insert number)

Indiana House of Representatives

State House

200 W. Washington Street

Indianapolis, IN 46204

The salutation of your letter should read, “Dear Representative (insert last name).”

The Honorable (insert name of State Senator)

State Senator, District (insert number)

State House

200 W. Washington Street

Indianapolis, IN 46204

The salutation of your letter should read, “Dear Senator (insert last name).”

The Honorable (insert U.S. Senator’s name)

Senate Office Building

Washington, D.C. 20515

The salutation of your letter should read, “Dear Senator (insert last name).”

The Honorable (insert U.S. Representative’s name)

House of Representatives

Washington, D.C. 20515

The salutation of your letter should read, “Dear Congressman/woman (insert last name).”

The President

The White House

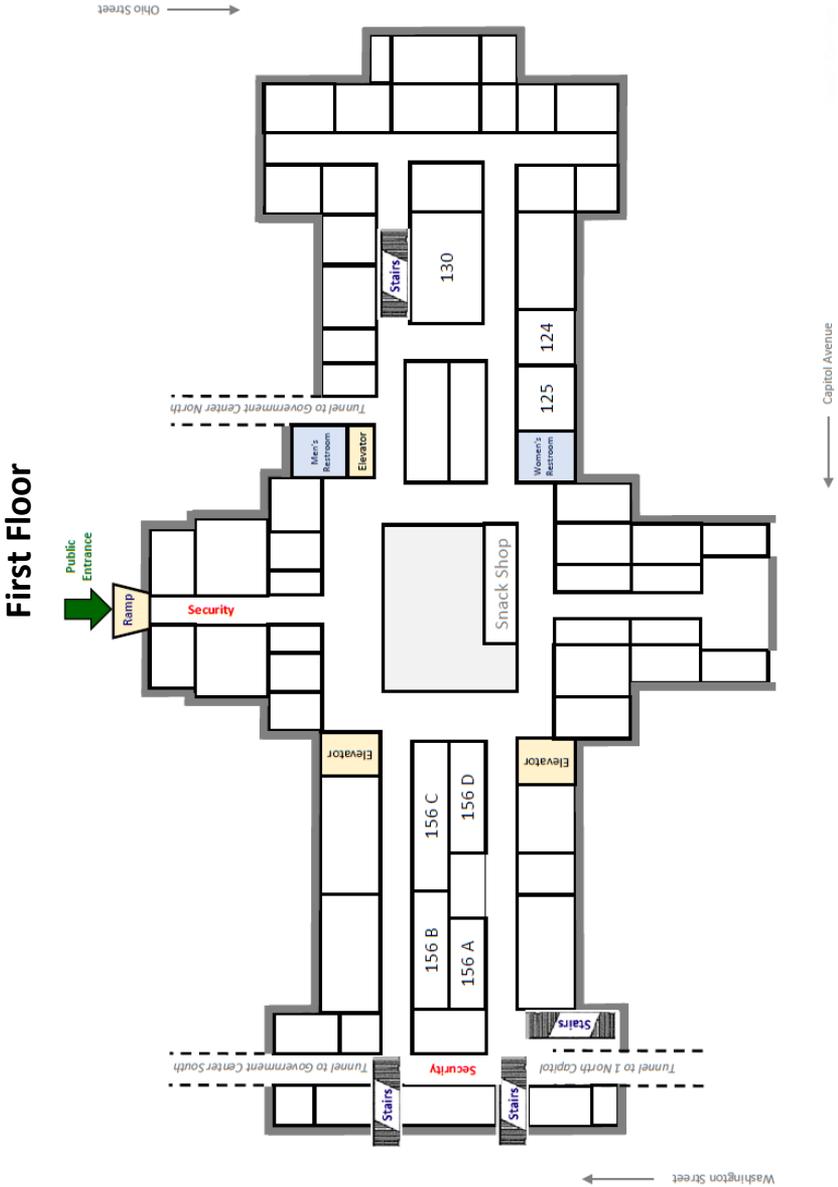
Washington, D.C. 20500

The salutation of your letter should read, “Dear Mr. or Madame President.”

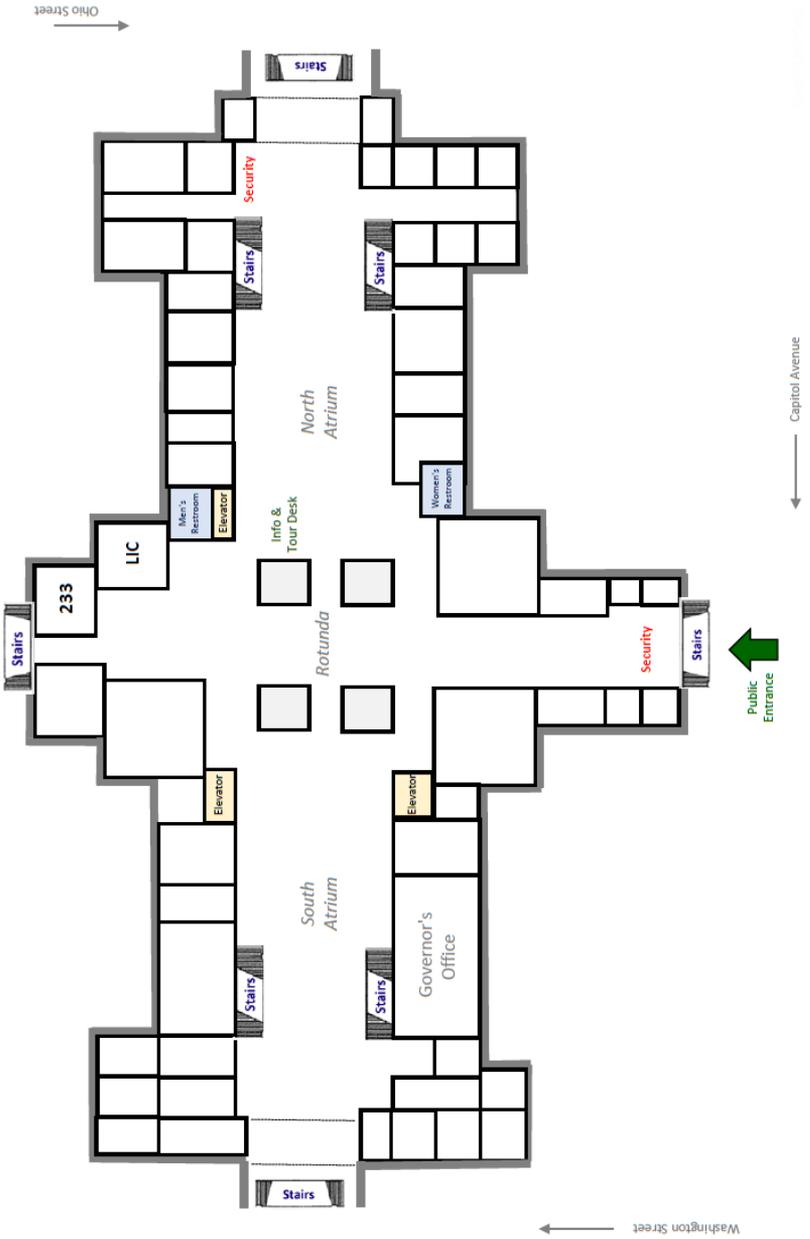


Map of State House

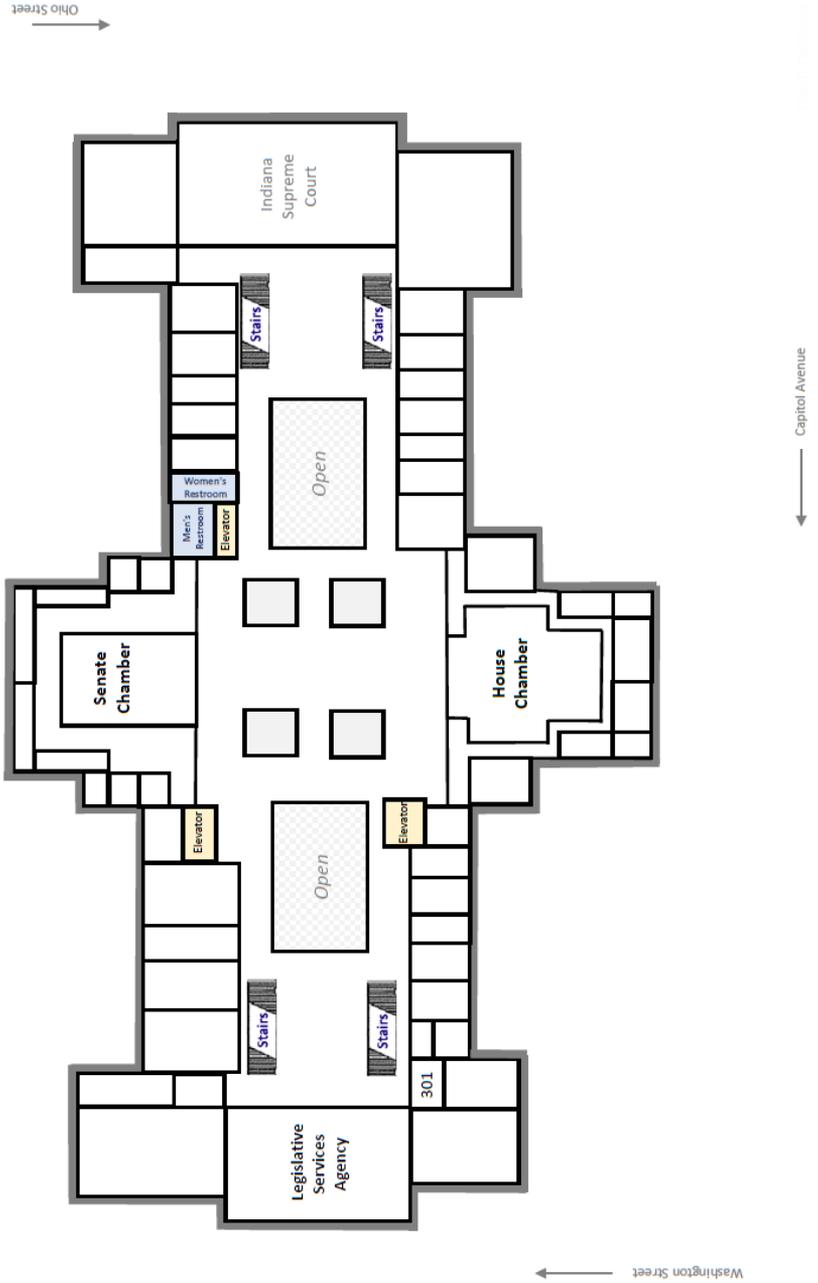
Maps are courtesy of the [Indiana General Assembly](#).



Second Floor



Third Floor



Fourth Floor

Ohio Street →



← Capital Avenue

← Washington Street

Appendix A

Legislative Priorities and Foundational Statements

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2026 Legislative Priorities

1. Indiana Code Title 20 Education Regulatory Relief

The Indiana General Assembly has passed 308 new K-12 education laws over the last eight legislative sessions, or an average of 38.5 new laws per session. This high volume of enacted laws requires significant implementation and compliance efforts, and administrative reporting duties. With more than 1,500 pages of state laws and regulations to comply with, this regulatory environment takes the focus away from our “Why” of elevating student achievement outcomes. ISBA wholeheartedly supports continued efforts for regulatory relief beyond HEA 1002-2025 (Public Law 214). We recommend the following statutes be modified or repealed:

A. Repeal GAAP Accounting Requirements

Make accrual (GAAP) accounting optional for the school corporations required to use this method of accounting. We believe IC 5-1-11.5-3 should be amended and made optional (change the “shall” to a “may”). Currently, this section requires school corporations with an ADM of more than 15,000 students to prepare an annual financial report using the modified accrual basis of accounting that yields no clear and tangible benefits for most entities. Based on the 2024-2025 school year enrollment data, this provision of law only applied to eight school corporations. According to school officials with Carmel Clay Schools, this requirement has resulted in an average annual cost increase of \$100,000 for consultant services and consuming approximately 900 hours of additional work. Fort Wayne Community Schools has indicated a similar experience with staffing time and costs. Those who like this accounting system can continue to use it while

eliminating the mandate of duplicate accounting methods and excessive costs.

B. Provide Local Control on Third-Party Options of SBOA Audits

ISBA supports giving school corporations more flexibility in contracting with third-party CPA firms or companies to seek lower cost audit options that would satisfy State Board of Accounts audit guidelines. School corporations have documented significant increases in the audit costs charged by the state, or its contracted vendor, in the past few years. Where costs can be optimized at the local level, school corporations should be granted this flexibility, rather than have to comply with a prescribed audit rate set based on federal and state regulations.

C. Expand Fund Transfer Flexibility for Certain School Districts

School corporations transferring more than 15% from the Education Fund to the Operations Fund are considered to have transferred an excessive amount and must undergo extensive state reporting and review requirements under IC 20-40-2. ISBA supports the aim to focus on student achievement outcomes, not inputs, at the school corporation level, including school board governance and oversight. ISBA proposes the consideration of the following options concerning interfund transfers of school corporation revenues:

- 1) Total deregulation with a repeal of the fund transfer limits established in IC 20-40-2 given the existence of teacher compensation goals and requirements.
- 2) Full transfer flexibility for performance qualified school corporations (under IC 20-24.2-2) or add new criteria for exempt school corporations to include all or some

combination of the following components: a) “high performing” academically (A or B rated school corporation); b) Debt Service rate of less than 70 cents per \$100/AV; c) meets teacher compensation requirements as set forth in statute, and d) not on the DUAB watchlist.

3) A 2-year hold harmless for Education Fund to Operations Fund transfers up to 20% through June 30, 2028, for all school corporations unless the school corporation is on the DUAB watchlist or is a D or F school corporation under the school accountability framework (these school corporations would still need to comply with all statutory requirements under IC 20-40-2-9 and IC 20-40-2-10).

4) Provide for local control of which funds are used to pay salaries, regardless of the position.

These changes would help address the significant increases in transportation expenses (school bus pricing and fuel costs) and the fact that almost 80 percent of Operations Fund dollars are spent on just the three expenses of transportation, utilities, and insurance.

D. Repeal of Laws That Restrict Use and Transfer of School Buildings

Current laws on underutilized and vacant school buildings restrict the authority of school boards to make determinations on the appropriate use and sale of school buildings and require the transfer of these buildings for just \$1. The laws impose burdensome reporting requirements on school corporations that include listing all buildings owned by the school corporation, determining the designed occupancy of each building, and assessing the current use and percentage of use of each building for

classroom instruction. Additionally, the laws require school corporations to follow complex procedures with specified timelines that include giving notice to multiple entities, providing estimated costs of operating the building, and allowing onsite inspection of the building before being able to sell or lease a school building. Given recent changes in the law on school funding that increase both state and local revenue to charter schools to meet facility needs, school corporations should be relieved of these restrictions, and these laws should be repealed.

E. Add AED Compliance Flexibility

House Enrolled Act 1515-2025 (Public Law 232) requires that an operational automated external defibrillator (AED) is present at each event in which students have an increased risk of sudden cardiac arrest. This law has created a substantial unfunded mandate for schools. It has also led to some confusion as it does not define “event.” Secondary schools regularly have multiple “events” happening at any given time. Districts are reporting substantial costs associated with compliance as per unit costs are approximately \$2,500.

HEA 1515, which took effect on July 1, will be difficult for school corporations to comply with, creating substantial liability exposure should an incident occur. It can be argued that it’s safer to have AEDs in fixed locations at schools/buildings, so there is never a question about where the AEDs are located in case of emergencies.

While well intentioned, ISBA supports a modification to the law to allow multiple events in proximity at one location to share AEDs. Let school corporations decide how many units are needed to optimally fulfill its required

venue-specific emergency action plan for sudden cardiac arrest.

F. Provide Flexibility in Contracting for School Administrators

Current laws require school boards to hire administrators by using a regular teacher contract and then provide additional rights to the administrators. This results in administrators having rights both as a teacher and as an administrator and imposes significant burdens on school boards in cases where the board wants to either reassign or terminate the administrator. School boards should be given the flexibility to determine whether an administrator should be hired using the regular teacher contract or some other type of employment agreement.

2. TIF Taxing Matters

A. Assign Base AV to all Property

ISBA supports the suitable and reasonable use of Tax Increment Financing (TIF) as a fiscal policy tool for community economic development with appropriate guidelines for redevelopment commissions. It is important that the original assessment, whether the property is taxable or not, is used for the calculation of the AV base for a TIF area to ensure all appropriate taxes flow to the respective taxing entities, including schools. If a proposed TIF property is not taxable at the time of the allocation area being established, ISBA proposes that the taxes that would have been paid as pre-developed land be included in the base AV to determine property tax levy distributions to local units of government.

B. Limit the Percentage of Incremental AV Captured by the Redevelopment Commission

AMEND IC 36-7-14-39 to require redevelopment commissions to annually distribute 15% of the incremental assessed value to all local taxing units. This is a permissible policy via a “may” provision. ISBA supports changing this provision to “shall.”

C. School Board Member as a Voting Member

AMEND IC 36-7-14-6.1 to require the municipal and county executive to appoint a school board member as a **voting member** of the redevelopment commission. In cases where there is more than one school corporation located within the territory served by the redevelopment commission, the school board member who is appointed shall be recommended by the school corporation that has the largest assessed valuation (gross or net).

3. Various Education Matters

A. Clarify Senate Enrolled Act 1 on “Cooling Off Period” for General Obligation Bonds

Language included in Senate Enrolled Act 1 (Public Law 68) regarding general obligation (G.O.) bonds and the new 12-month “cooling off” provision has led to confusion. Implementation guidance issued by the Department of Local Government Finance interprets the “cooling off” period to apply to not only short-term G.O. bonds issued prior to May 1, 2025, for two years or less, but also for issuances after May 1, 2025, for a period of not more than five years. ISBA supports legislation to change the restrictions to apply to only short-term G.O. bond issuances for two years or less. Longer term bonding is a necessary strategy to address facility repairs, renovations,

or new construction needs of a school corporation. Restrictions on the issuance of bonds for five years or less will result in less favorable lending terms and rates.

B. Local Income Option (LIT) for School Corporation

Senate Enrolled Act 1 (Public Law 68-2025) eliminated redistribution of LIT to school corporations (in former CAGIT counties) resulting in a loss of more than \$58 million annually. In total, as a result of all the new property tax reforms and restrictions imposed in SEA 1, school corporations will experience a net reduction of \$740 million in levy dollars over three-years (2026-2028). While for many school corporations, the loss of levy dollars is a “decrease to the increase” from what would have been collected. However, for 74 school corporations the loss in property tax dollars will be a true decrease from the 2025 levies received. School corporations already experience tight constraints, largely from circuit breaker/tax cap losses, in Operation Fund levies. As aforementioned, almost 80 percent of the Operations Fund revenues are used for transportation, insurance, and utilities on average for all school corporations. The added constraints imposed by SEA 1 will tighten budgets even more, leaving little funding for facility management needs. ISBA supports either reinstated the mandatory LIT redistribution, or providing school corporations with the authority to impose a Local option Income Tax.

C. Stop Arm Violation Fine and Penalty Enforcement

Enhanced efforts are needed to enforce school bus stop arm violation penalties and fines to better protect students in school bus zones. Legislation introduced in the 2021 and 2022 sessions proposed that a registered owner of a motor vehicle commits an infraction if the owner's

vehicle is used to violate the school bus stop arm law. Passage of this legislation would lessen the burden of proof to identify the driver of the vehicle.

4. On My Way Prekindergarten Program Restoration and Expansion

Several changes were made to curtail the scope and costs of the On My Way Pre-K Program in the 2025 state legislative session. An enrollment cap was set at 2,500 total children, with a portion reserved for families meeting limited eligibility criteria. In addition, the eligibility threshold based on family income is now 140% of the federal poverty level (previously 150%). ISBA calls for not only these restrictions or cuts to be restored, but to increase the program eligibility based on the child's family household income from 140% to 400% of the federal poverty level (which equals the last income criteria set for the Indiana Choice Scholarship Voucher Program before income guidelines were removed to qualify all families in that program). ISBA supports increasing state funding for the On My Way Pre-K grant program to significantly expand opportunities for early childhood learning and supports that meet rigorous PATHS to Quality standards. Early childhood education is foundational to long-term student success.

According to 2021 research conducted by the Center for Early Learning at Purdue University, On My Way Pre-K children performed better than comparison children on general school readiness skills, such as identifying shapes, colors and numbers and language and literacy skills in kindergarten. The On My Way Pre-K students also tended to have higher performance on ILEARN English/Language Arts tests than the comparison children in grades 3 and 4. (See study summary at: <https://www.in.gov/fssa/carefinder/files/OMWPK-2-Study-Summary-Report-0122.pdf>)

2026 Legislative Foundational Statements

The Indiana School Boards Association (ISBA) is dedicated to improving the quality of public education and school governance throughout the state of Indiana. ISBA recognizes the role of the General Assembly in enacting legislation that impacts public education and is committed to representing the interests of its member school corporations when addressing legislative initiatives. ISBA has adopted the following foundational statements to formalize its position as it advocates on behalf of Indiana school boards, public education, and students on present and future legislation.

Support Exceptional Learning Opportunities for Hoosier Children

The ISBA supports programs and policies to provide exceptional learning opportunities for Hoosier children from Pre-K to Grade 12. Given that approximately 91 percent of all K-12 students attend a public school, the families of more than 1 million students have spoken and have made public schools the “schools of choice.” ISBA believes that, through local control, school boards have created a rich and diverse public education system that provides a multitude of learning environments, programs, and curricular offerings to students. Through these opportunities school boards must prepare a new generation of students to be college and career ready, helping drive the economic growth and prosperity of the state.

Promote Adequate Funding of Public Schools to Improve Student Outcomes

The ISBA supports the funding of public schools that is annually adjusted to keep ahead of inflation and that improves Indiana’s national rankings on per pupil funding and teacher compensation. In addition, school corporations require sufficient property tax levy dollars to fund all obligations paid through the

Operations Fund. This allows local boards of education to support the ongoing improvement in the quality of public education and ensure adequate resources to address the learning needs of all children. ISBA supports the equitable funding of public schools, recognizing that schools may need additional funding to educate economically disadvantaged students and students with unique educational needs.

Empower School Board Authority

The ISBA supports empowering local boards of education with the authority to govern educational and financial matters, including curriculum and health and safety measures for students and employees of school corporations. In addition, the ISBA believes that school boards and local voters should maintain the exclusive authority to make changes to local reorganization plans, including consolidation and disannexation of school corporations. ISBA opposes state mandated consolidation, especially when imposed without public input.

Engage and Involve Families

The ISBA believes that the involvement of all families results in stronger schools and better student outcomes. School boards continually strive to create opportunities for parents, guardians, and caregivers to be heard, including providing avenues to review curricular materials. Parents, guardians, and caregivers should continue to have a process or opportunity for input on educational matters through the classroom teacher, principal, superintendent, and finally the school board. While ultimately, the establishment of student achievement goals and curriculum review and approval rest with the school board, family engagement helps shape goals and educational programming.

Maintain Safe and Supportive Classrooms

The ISBA believes that every child deserves a safe and secure learning environment. ISBA supports local control—with state support, broad policy, and adequate funding—to implement comprehensive school safety plans informed by a threat

assessment and developed in collaboration with law enforcement and public safety agencies. ISBA opposes both funded or unfunded mandates requiring the implementation of specific school safety equipment, devices, or technology. Policies and funding pertaining to school safety should be holistic and should also address the social and emotional needs of students and staff, including resources for guidance counselors, social workers, school psychologists, and mental health therapists to support student and staff wellness.

Promote High-Quality Teachers and School Leaders

The ISBA believes that effective educational achievement outcomes depend on a high-quality teacher and administrator workforce. We support legislation that respects and values the teaching profession. We support state policies and laws that enable “teachers to teach” without burdensome regulation or policies that diminish or demean the profession. ISBA seeks support for teacher recruitment strategies that both address critical shortage areas and attract a pipeline of diverse teacher candidates into the classroom, such as promising “Grow Your Own” partnerships between schools and postsecondary institutions and state pre-service teacher scholarship programs to attract more minority teachers to better reflect Indiana’s student population. ISBA is a proponent of initiatives that improve the retention of excellent educators, including enhanced support for mentoring and leadership development.

Support Professional Development

The ISBA supports professional development opportunities that provide dedicated time for training and mentoring that enhance and elevate the teaching profession. We support state funding for professional development and in-service programs. The ISBA also supports enhanced teacher training on emerging technology advances impacting the delivery of instruction to students, such as the effective use of e-learning instruction strategies and artificial intelligence.

Seek Rigorous and Consistent Financial and Academic Outcome Measures for All Schools

The ISBA believes that the best approach to tracking the academic progress and effectiveness of our schools is through public transparency and availability of multiple academic outcome measures. The metrics used to grade school corporations and individual schools should be transparent and easy to understand. ISBA supports the use of multiple measures in the GPS Data Dashboard to judge the quality of schools to reduce the over-reliance on summative assessment scores.

Regardless of which metrics are used to judge the quality of schools, all schools (public, public charter, and private) receiving state tuition support dollars should adhere to the same academic and financial accountability metrics. The public has a right to expect transparency and compliance with the public notice requirements, record keeping and audits needed for financial accountability, and access to public records from all schools that receive state funding. Whether an audit is conducted by the State Board of Accounts (SBOA) or by a contracted accounting firm, all audits should be submitted to the SBOA and made publicly available through the state's Gateway system. In addition, any school or school system receiving state tuition support should post an annual budget accessible to the public and have a public hearing on the budget before adoption. Dollars flowing to each school system type should be itemized separately in the state budget. Taxpayers deserve full transparency regarding how their tax dollars are spent on these programs.

The ISBA recognizes and commends the efforts of public schools to fulfill the unique constitutional duty to educate every child.

Oppose Further Changes to School Board Election Procedures

The ISBA supports maintaining the nonpartisan option for declaration of school board candidacy. Enabling nonpartisan candidates to run for school board office helps ensure options to voters to choose school board members based on their

qualifications, experience, and vision for addressing local educational needs, rather than on party affiliation alone. School board members are entrusted with deciding what is in the best interest of students in their community. The focus of a school board member should remain on what is best for all children.

Protect School Calendar/Instructional Time

The ISBA supports the legislative mandate to conduct a minimum of 180 student instructional days and believes the local governing body should retain the authority to determine the school calendar. The ISBA supports giving increased flexibility to school boards to determine the length of the instructional day for professional development and student achievement benefits.

Support Career and Technical Education (CTE)

The ISBA believes career and technical education (CTE) should enable students to complete a postsecondary credential during high school or move toward gainful employment upon graduation. All students should have the opportunity to engage in career exploration with support from highly qualified and professionally trained educators and through access to meaningful work-based learning, internships, or modern youth apprenticeships. Secondary CTE courses should create career pathways that lead to transferable skills and certifications to foster life-long learning. Policymakers and state agency leaders must support fiscal and administrative policies to incentivize cooperation between school corporations and employers, as well as to help with the purchase of new equipment, curricular resources and materials, the cost of all credentialing exams, and student transportation.

Create Public School Tax Credit Programs

The ISBA supports an income tax credit for charitable contributions to public education foundations comparable to the credit for contributions to Scholarship Granting Organizations. In addition, ISBA supports a tax deduction for parents of public school students for educational expenses, including educational

materials not paid for by the school corporation through the state curricular materials reimbursement fund.

Allow Adequate Time and Support for Implementation of Policy Changes

The ISBA supports giving school corporations sufficient time to implement and assess the impact of the changes being made in the field of education. The constant change in standards, laws, and policies makes it difficult to determine whether the changes are resulting in improved educational environments, opportunities, and/or outcomes for students.

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Follow-up Actions

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One North Capitol Ave., Ste 1215
Indianapolis, IN 46204

317-639-0330 | www.isba-ind.org