

ISBA

INDIANA SCHOOL BOARDS
ASSOCIATION

Taking K-12 Education Advocacy to the Next Level

Terry Spradlin, ISBA Executive Director

AGENDA

- I. Q&A w/ Policymaker: Advocacy Tips –
What Works and Doesn't Work Well
- II. The Importance of Advocacy
- III. ISBA's Role in Advocacy
- IV. ISBA Legislative Action Network

AGENDA (cont.)

- V. V. Role of School Board Legislative Liaison
- VI. ISBA 2025 Advocacy Guide
- VII. Sharing Your Story
- VIII. Advocacy Strategies

Why Is Advocacy So Important?

- Escalation of social and political challenges confronting K-12 public education more than ever before
- The Indiana General Assembly significantly impacts K-12 education governance and funding – and lately, they have passed lots of new laws!
- We need to engage in advocacy to help inform, influence, and shape sound education policy in support of public education
- ISBA and our members are more impactful when we stand united to support the mission of public schools

ISBA's Role in Advocacy

- ISBA's core services cover: **Board Services, Board Policy, Legal Services, and Legislative Services**
 - Under the Legislative Services area, ISBA lobbies on behalf of its membership on important legislation affecting K-12 public education and school governance

Process to Establish Priorities

- The **ISBA Legislative Priorities** each year are developed in the summer by the **ISBA Legislative Committee**
- Legislative Priorities reflect a **proactive agenda** to support and advance principles of effective school governance and exemplary K-12 public education for the more than 1 million students in our system
- The Legislative Committee also develops **Foundational Statements** to guide ISBA on the positions of the membership on a range of topics that are likely to emerge during a session
- Both documents are approved at the **Annual Delegate Assembly**

- We work in concert with many other K-12 associations and state agencies on bills of common interest
- Now three voices representing nearly 1,700 members and 290 school corporations
- The **ISBA Legislative Action Network** is designed to unite our membership to stand together with a *unified voice* and through strength in numbers to impact education policy in the state

Grassroots Advocacy: Strength at our Core

- **Grassroots advocacy works!**
- ISBA's grassroots advocacy objective is to capitalize on membership participation at the right time, place, and method
- **ISBA's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan** includes taking its advocacy efforts to the next level as a core goal with elevation of the **Legislative Action Network** as a key strategy

Timely Resources Available

- ✓ State House representation
- ✓ Weekly ISBA legislative updates
- ✓ “Top 3 Things to Know” Video Update Series
- ✓ Bill tracking list service
- ✓ Live legislative update webinars
- ✓ Call-to-action legislative alerts
- ✓ Website resources
- ✓ Advocacy Guide
- ✓ State House Day

ISBA Legislative Services

isba-ind.org/legislative.html



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LEGISLATIVE SERVICES



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES & ADVOCACY

WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE UPDATES

WHAT BILLS ARE THE ISBA TRACKING?

HOW A BILL BECOMES A LAW (PDF)

LEGISLATOR CONTACT INFORMATION

MORE RESOURCES

ADVOCACY GUIDE AND TRAINING INFO

- **The Legislative Action Network** is a unique, formal program to empower ISBA and its members to achieve our goal to *“Take ISBA Advocacy to the Next Level.”* Our **objectives** of this goal area are:
- ✓ Increase members’ overall knowledge of legislative processes at the state and federal level
 - ✓ Equip members with effective techniques and strategies for targeted grassroots advocacy and campaigns
 - ✓ Enhance relationships with state governmental leaders
 - ✓ Inform, influence, and shape sound governance policy for K-12 education

- The **LAN** helps unify and mobilize “*the voice*” of school board members and increase State House visibility through designated legislative liaisons
- The legislative liaison is to be your board’s “eyes, ears, and champion” to coordinate local advocacy efforts to benefit your school corporation, students, and K-12 public education across the state
- Please designate a legislative liaison on your board no later than your January organization meeting



Importance of Your Voice

- Board members, like legislators, hold positions of influence in your communities
 - ✓ You deal with a variety of issues at the local level on an ongoing basis and are an informed source of information about 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 on your school community and students
 - ✓ As few as 5-10 calls or emails on bills can sway their vote



- ✓ Should know and support the **ISBA Legislative Priorities** issued in advance of each session
- ✓ Know your area legislators: go to the IGA “find your legislator” website link at: <http://iga.in.gov/legislative/find-legislators/>
- ✓ Track ISBA Legislative Services/LAN communications and provide timely updates on legislative session activities at local board meetings
- ✓ Identify ISBA legislative priorities for which you will be willing to testify, if necessary, during committee hearings on these bills

- ✓ Communicate regularly via email, phone calls, or letters with area legislators – become a trusted source of information to them
- ✓ Coordinate email, phone call, or letter writing campaigns to your area legislators, media, and the broader community, especially in response to call-to-action alerts
- ✓ Organize legislative forums or attend Third House meetings hosted by other organizations
- ✓ Attend ISBA's 7th Annual State House Day on February 18, 2025

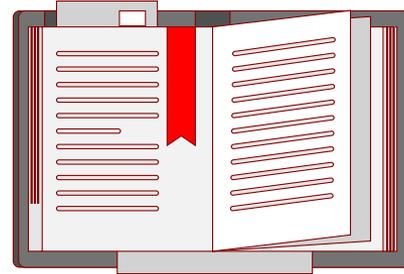
ISBA Advocacy Guide available:

- An **Advocacy Guide** has been created with tips and strategies for communicating with legislators via persuasive, localized stories.
 - The contents of the guide includes:
 - ✓ ISBA Legislative Priorities and Foundational Statements
 - ✓ Get Informed
 - ✓ Contact Your Legislators
 - ✓ Share Your Story and Information
 - ✓ Invite and Involve Community
 - ✓ Top 10 Tips of Effective Lobbying
 - ✓ A Checklist of Quick Communication Tips
 - ✓ Map of the State House



➤ Tips to “**Share Your Story:**”

- ✓ **Focus conversation on 1 or 2 topics**; be brief and be prepared
- ✓ Share your perspective on each topic and the impact of the proposal on your school community with a few facts and statistics and/or a brief story or local examples to illustrate your perspective
- ✓ **Share stories about the successes occurring in your school community**
- ✓ Be respectful and positive – even if their position is different from ours



➤ Tips to **“Share Your Story:”**

✓ During a legislative session:

- Focus your call or correspondence on one issue
- Identify the bill #
- Briefly state your position on the bill
- Ask their position and email the ISBA team on what you learn

TIPS

- **Tip 1** Know your area legislators
- **Tip 2** Develop lines of communication and relationships of trust with your legislators
- **Tip 3** Don't overdo your lobbying
- **Tip 4** Show respect. Be positive
- **Tip 5** Lobby with your real-life experience

- **Tip 6** Set priorities
- **Tip 7** Build a community coalition
- **Tip 8** Don't forget the media
- **Tip 9** Be sensitive to partisan politics, but always try to come across as nonpartisan
- **Tip 10** Be reasonable and consider compromise on contentious issues



Examples of Effective Advocacy at Work!

- **The Joint Committee in Southern, IN**
- **The TSC Fall Legislative Breakfast**
- **The “Oriole Advocates” established by Avon
Community Schools**

2025 Emerging Issues

- Property Tax Reform
- Housing Development Incentives
- Medicaid Review
- Universal Choice Scholarship Vouchers
- Restrictions on Election Cycles for School Referenda
- Chronic Absenteeism
- Partisan School Board Elections (again!)

Thank You!

**For More Info
Contact:**

Terry Spradlin, Executive Director
tspradlin@isba-ind.org