



INDIANA SCHOOL BOARDS  
ASSOCIATION

Working Together –  
Let's ADVOCATE FOR  
Public Schools.

**2020 Advocacy Guide**

Presented by the  
Indiana School Boards Association

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## Acknowledgements

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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, many decisions made by the Indiana General Assembly also significantly impact school corporation governance across the state. Typically more than 100 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.

## Why Is Your 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.

## Will What You Do Really Make A Difference?

- Absolutely! As school board members, you are in an excellent position to educate and influence the legislative process.
- You, like they, are elected 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 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.

# “Top 5” Action Checklist

## 1. Get Informed

My State Senator:

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My State Representative:

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## 2. Contact Your Legislators

➤ Contacted During Interim:

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(Date) \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone/E-Mail/  
Letter/In Person)

---

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone/E-Mail/  
Letter/In Person)

---

(Date) \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone/E-Mail/  
Letter/In Person)

➤ Contacted During Session:

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date) \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone/E-Mail/  
Letter/In Person)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date) \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone/E-Mail/  
Letter/In Person)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date) \_\_\_\_\_ (Phone/E-Mail/  
Letter/In Person)

**3. Share Information**

➤ Action (Date & Description)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

➤ Action (Date & Description)

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



#### 4. Invite & Involve

- Action (Date & Description)

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- Action (Date & Description)

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#### 5. Come to Indianapolis

- Trips to Indianapolis (Date & Description)

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#### Follow Up with ISBA

Let the ISBA Legislative team know about your conversations with legislators and what responses you receive at: [tspradlin@isba-ind.org](mailto:tspradlin@isba-ind.org).

# Know Your Elected Officials

You can find contact information for your legislators on the ISBA website at: [www.isba-ind.org](http://www.isba-ind.org). Look under the tab: Services/Legislative Services/How to Find Your Legislator.

You can also find this information directly at: [www.iga.in.gov](http://www.iga.in.gov). Then click on “Information” and then select “Find Your Legislator.”

➤ **Your Senator**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

District Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Local Phone \_\_\_\_\_

State House Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

➤ **Your Representative**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

District Number \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Local Phone \_\_\_\_\_

State House Phone \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

## 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 2020 Legislative Priorities and Foundation 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](http://www.isba-ind.org)), where you will find a wealth of information:

- ISBA's Legislative Positions & Priorities
- Bill tracking list of K-12 legislation
- Weekly legislative updates
- K-12 school funding white paper
- How a bill becomes law

The Indiana General Assembly's website ([www.iga.in.gov](http://www.iga.in.gov)) also provides valuable information:

- Read biographies of your legislators
- Watch legislative hearings and floor action live (or archived)
- Find votes on bills
- Review 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, or make telephone calls. Contact your legislators prior to the legislative session to introduce yourself and begin to develop a relationship.

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 wanting 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:

- House of Representatives: 800-382-9842
- Indiana Senate: 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 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 district'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. The Indiana Coalition of Public Education can help guide you on forming a local coalition through its association. Please see the ICPE website for more information at: [www.icpe2011.com](http://www.icpe2011.com).

## 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 2020 session.

Attend the **Second Annual ISBA State House Day** in February 2020. This event will include a briefing session, legislative panel, 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!

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# 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: [www.iga.in.gov](http://www.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 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.
- ✓ 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 district 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

### **Indiana State Governor**

**Eric Holcomb**

State House

200 W. Washington Street.

Indianapolis, IN 46204

### **Lieutenant Governor of Indiana**

**Suzanne Crouch**

State House

200 W. Washington Street., #333

Indianapolis, IN 46204

### **Secretary of State of Indiana**

**Connie Lawson**

State House

200 W. Washington Street., Room 201

Indianapolis, IN 46204

### **Indiana Attorney General**

**Curtis Hill**

Indiana Government Center South

302 W. Washington St., 5th Floor

Indianapolis, IN 46204

**State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**Dr. Jennifer McCormick**

South Tower, Suite 600  
115 W. Washington Street  
Indianapolis, IN 46204

**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 President**

The White House  
Washington, D.C. 20500

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

**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).”

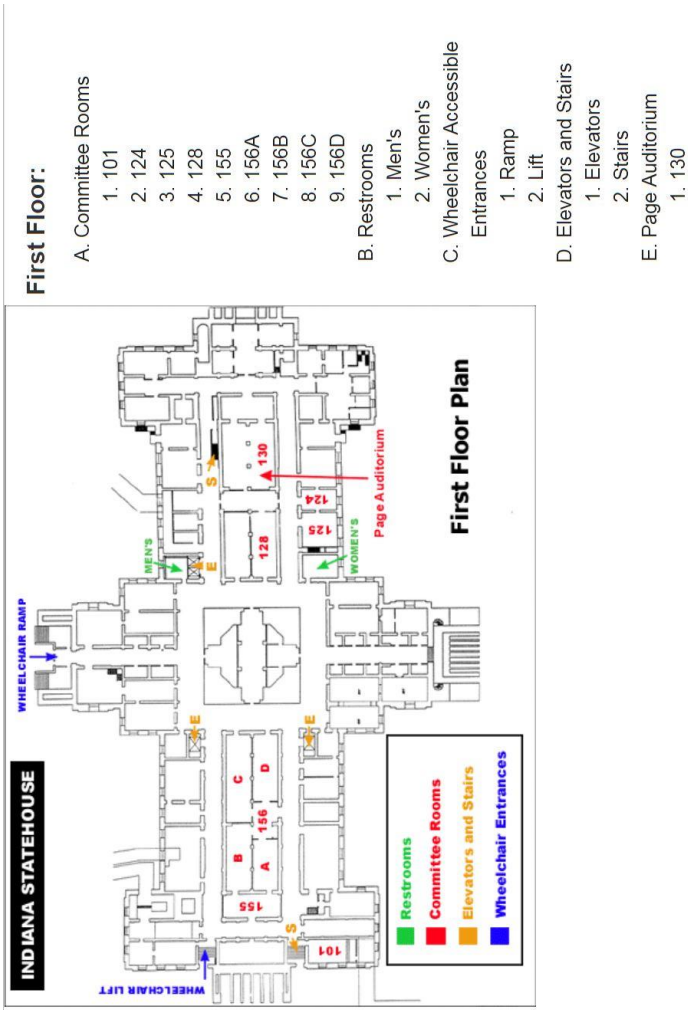
**The Honorable (insert U.S. Representative’s name)**

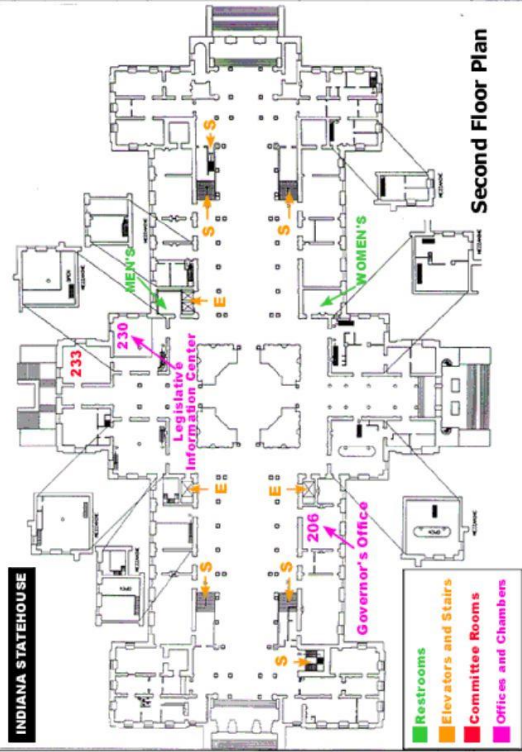
House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

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

# Map of State House

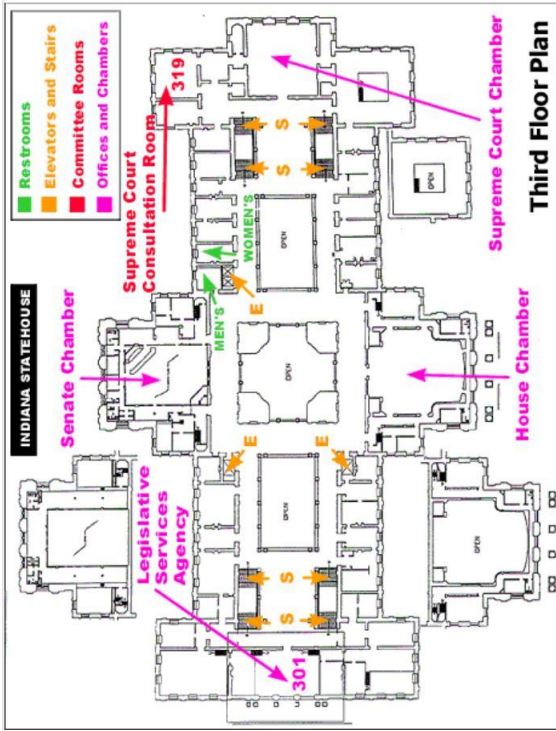
Maps are courtesy of the [Indiana General Assembly](#).





**Second Floor:**

- A. Committee Rooms
  - 1. 233
- B. Restrooms
  - 1. Men's
  - 2. Women's
- C. Offices and Chambers
  - 1. Governor's Office
  - 2. Legislative Information Center
- D. Elevators and Stairs
  - 1. Elevators
  - 2. Stairs



### Third Floor:

- A. Committee Rooms
  - 1. Supreme Court Consultation Room- 319
- B. Restrooms
  - 1. Men's
  - 2. Women's
- C. Offices and Chambers
  - 1. Senate Chamber
  - 2. House Chamber
  - 3. Supreme Court Chamber
  - 4. Legislative Services Agency
- D. Elevators and Stairs
  - 1. Elevators
  - 2. Stairs



# Appendix A

## Legislative Priorities and Foundational Statements



# 2020 Legislative Priorities

## **1. Increased Financial Resources to Support K-12 Students**

The ISBA supports the adequate funding of public schools that is annually adjusted to keep pace with or ahead of inflation. According to a 2018 report from the National Center for Education Statistics, Indiana ranked 36<sup>th</sup> in the nation (in 2015) for instructional spending per pupil at \$9,529, compared to the U.S. average of \$11,454. State tuition support appropriations have not kept pace with inflation since 2010 when using the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics CPI Inflation Calculator. Had tuition support funding kept pace with inflation over this period, \$295 million more would have been available to school corporations for per pupil dollars in FY 2019 (Downs, 2018). The Indiana General Assembly is to be commended for the \$763 million in new funding for K-12 education over the next two years and more than a 4 percent increase in total funding (tuition support and categorical funding) per year. This significant improvement in funding will need to be sustained and elevated in future years to improve Indiana's ranking on per pupil spending and teacher salary.

If the state budget is opened during the 2020 legislative session to expend state excess reserve funds, ISBA supports using a portion of said funds to increase the Teacher Appreciation Grant Program, the Next Generation Hoosier Educator Scholarship Program, as well as the On My Way Pre-K program.

## **2. Enhanced Teacher Recruitment and Retention Programs**

School administrators are becoming increasingly concerned that fewer individuals are entering the teaching profession. In light of the significant role a teacher plays in the education of a child, efforts need to be made to attract more persons to the field of education. Similarly, efforts need to be made to keep teachers in the classroom. School boards need greater flexibility in the current compensation system to reward teachers with advanced education degrees and those with experience in the classroom. CTE funding prioritization and a graduation pathway need to be established that encourage and prepare students for careers in the teaching profession. Professional development funding should be prioritized to support high school teachers requiring additional credentials that have been mandated to continue teaching dual credit and AP courses. Finally, ISBA would support increased funding for the Next Generation Hoosier Educator Scholarships, as well as the William A. Crawford Minority Teacher Scholarships, administered by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (ICHE).

## **3. Expanded Prekindergarten Programs in Indiana**

The ISBA supports increased state funding to expand prekindergarten programs across the state to serve the approximately 27,000 low-income four-year olds who currently are without access to a high-quality prekindergarten program (Early Learning Indiana, 2018). There is a significant return-on-the-investment for every dollar invested in high-quality prekindergarten programs.

The Indiana General Assembly now provides \$22 million annually for the prekindergarten program for four-year old children. Eligible families seeking child enrollment in the “On My Way Pre-K” program can apply for a 2019-2020 pre-K grant through the FSSA’s Office of Early Childhood and Out-Of-School Learning. To be eligible:

- Families must have an income below 127 percent of the federal poverty level;
- The child must be four-years old by August 1, 2019, and starting kindergarten in the 2020-2021 school year;
- Parents/guardians in the household must be working, going to school or attending job training.

Once enrolled, families may choose from any of the eligible, enrolled “On My Way Pre-K” programs in their county.

This program should be expanded by modifying family income guidelines, extending eligibility to children living with grandparents or foster parents (without the work, school, or job training requirements for the guardian), and increasing overall program funding to provide more enrollment slots or to fund capacity building grants in counties where no programs have qualified as Level 3 or 4 Paths to Quality programs. Finally, the legislature should eliminate any funding of online prekindergarten or kindergarten programs as these programs are not research based with evidence of effectiveness. The monies from the online early childhood programs should be invested in the On My Way Pre-K program.

#### **4. School Board Vote on Local Redevelopment Commissions**

Local school board representatives should have voting rights on local (municipal or county) redevelopment commissions. Presently, school board representatives serve as non-voting members of these commissions. Redevelopment commissions have the authority to propose and enact TIF (tax increment financing) districts, upon approval of the city or county council, to capture tax revenue for projects that will hopefully enhance local economic development. Conceptually, this economic development then acts as a catalyst to jump-start neighborhood and community growth and ultimately lowers taxes based on higher property values.

There are effective TIFs and ineffective TIFs. If not done appropriately with limited duration, TIFs can have a negative financial impact on school corporations and actually erode revenues available to local units of government according to a 2016 study by the Center for Business and Economic Research at Ball State University.

A school board representative, as a voting member, should be included in a redevelopment commission's decisions. This is a sensible policy proposal given schools are one of the most important drivers of economic growth in a community. Their ability to maintain educational excellence in a growing economic environment is critical. It is well documented that the majority of families select communities, in part, based on the quality of their schools.

## **5. Assistance for Financially Distressed Schools**

The ISBA supports technical legislation to clarify the procedures and designations for school corporations under the new Fiscal and Qualitative Indicators Dashboard system created by House Enrolled Act 1315 (P.L. 213-2018(ss)). In particular, clarification is desired to better define the meaning of being on a “watch list” and the subsequent technical support and/or consequences the state will implement for school corporations on this annual list. In addition, clarity is needed to define and specify what triggers a school corporation from moving from the “observation list” to the “watch list,” and then subsequently to the designation as a “distressed political subdivision.” ISBA supports the ability for the governing body to have the express authority to annually petition the Distressed Unit Appeals Board for termination of the “distressed political subdivision” status and return the school corporation to good financial standing status.

## **6. Capital Referendum (Controlled Project) Ballot Language**

Under Indiana law, the following is the question that is submitted to eligible voters:

"Shall \_\_\_\_\_(insert the name of the political subdivision) issue bonds or enter into a lease to finance (insert a brief description of the controlled project), which is estimated to cost not more than \_\_\_\_\_(insert the total cost of the project) and is estimated to increase the property tax rate for debt service by

(insert increase in tax rate as determined by the department of local government finance)?" Indiana Code 6-1.1-20-3.6(c) (emphasis added).

The ballot question must contain three parts:

- a brief description of the project;
- the estimated total project cost; and
- the estimated tax rate increase for the project.

ISBA proposes adding a 10-year estimated net property tax rate as a fourth item of information included in the ballot question. If school corporations are retiring debt during the lifespan of an approved referendum, the net tax rate impact may be lessened. Due to the cost of the project, the net tax rate is an additional piece of information needed so that taxpayers/voters can understand the long-term cost impact to them. Inclusion of this information on the ballot will provide a more accurate depiction of the tax rates and levies of the school corporation.

## **7. School Board Compensation**

Current law allows school board members to receive up to \$2000 a year for their service as well as a per diem for attending board meetings. The maximum per diem rate for all school board members in the state is established by the Board of School Trustees of the Indianapolis Public Schools, whose determination is restricted by the rates established by the Marion County City-County Council. Tying per diem rates for school board meetings to the per diem rates for city-county council meetings is flawed since the governmental entities operate differently. The ISBA

proposes to authorize the Indiana State Board of Education to set the maximum per diem rate for all school board members, both elected and appointed, in every school corporation.

## **8. Deregulation Initiatives**

With the volume of laws that are being passed related to K-12 education each year by the General Assembly (e.g., 53 laws in 2019), efforts to streamline and/or repeal those laws that are not necessary are imperative. During the previous legislative session, some legislators noted specifically the number of laws requiring school corporations to provide professional development/training to school employees on a variety of issues. The ISBA supports continued efforts to deregulate and streamline these mandates. Many teacher training requirements should be moved from annual requirements to periodic requirements (once per five-year period) in concert with license renewal. In addition, many of these same requirements are placed upon non-certified staff and the necessity of these training requirements should be reviewed. Finally, duplication of financial reporting requirements to multiple agencies should be eliminated or reduced. Overall, the legislature should focus less on burdensome regulations and compliance reporting, and focus more on holding schools and educators accountable for results.

## **9. Tax Credits for Public Schools and Public-School Foundations**

The ISBA supports the creation of a state income tax credit for charitable contributions to a school corporation or an affiliated education foundation. There currently exists a tax credit system for monetary donations to Indiana colleges and universities and for financial contributions to scholarship-granting organizations (for choice scholarships). School corporations are experiencing financial distress with many financial constraints facing them. It would be prudent public policy to also incentivize taxpayers to donate to their local public schools or affiliated education foundations of their choosing. There are fewer than 100 education foundations associated with school corporations and that are members of the Indiana Association of Public Education Foundations. This tax credit will facilitate the creation of more education foundations that can, in turn, fund special initiatives, classroom grants and one-time program costs to provide a suitable intermediate funding source before school corporations have no alternative but to pursue a referendum.



# 2020 Legislative Foundational Statements

The Indiana School Boards Association is dedicated to improving the quality of education provided by public schools 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 and public education 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. Given that more than 94 percent of all K-12 students attend a public school, the parents of more than 1 million students have spoken and have made public schools the “schools of choice.” We believe that through local control, we have created a rich and diverse public education system that provides a multitude of programs and curricular offerings to students. Through these opportunities we are preparing a new generation of students to be college and career ready that will in turn help drive the economic growth and prosperity of the state.

## **Promote Progressive and Equitable Funding of Public Schools**

The ISBA supports the progressive funding of public schools that is annually adjusted to keep pace with or ahead of inflation. This will allow local boards of education to support the ongoing improvement in the quality of public education.

The ISBA supports funding that provides an equitable and level playing field for school corporations to provide equal educational opportunities for all children.

## **Empower School Board Authority**

The ISBA supports empowering local boards of education with the authority to govern the educational affairs and financial matters of individual public school corporations, including maintaining flexibility in the pursuit of local public questions (referenda) whether during primary elections, general elections, or municipal elections.

## **Maintain Elected/Appointed Boards and Reorganization Plans**

The ISBA supports the election and/or appointment of school board members on a nonpartisan basis.

The ISBA supports limiting the authority to make changes to local reorganization plans, including consolidation and disannexation of school corporations, to school boards and the voters who reside within the particular public school corporations affected and does

not support the General Assembly enacting legislation that mandates such changes.

### **Focus on Safe & Secure Learning Environments**

The ISBA supports local control—with state support, broad policy, and funding—to implement comprehensive strategies of a school safety plan that are developed with insights of a threat assessment and in collaboration with local law enforcement and public safety agencies. ISBA does not support mandates for implementation of specific school safety equipment, devices, or technology. Policies and funding pertaining to school safety should be holistic and include addressing the social and emotional needs of children.

### **Promote High-Quality Teachers and School Leaders**

The ISBA believes that the most effective education of Hoosier children in a school setting is derived from securing and maintaining the highest-quality teacher and administrator workforce possible. We respect the teaching profession as an honorable, noble profession and hold teachers in the highest regard. We support state policies and laws that enable “teachers to teach” without burdensome regulation or policies that diminish or demean the profession (e.g., licensure policies that do not require pedagogy training and knowledge and skill-based certification).

### **Support Staff Development Programs**

The ISBA supports professional development opportunities that provide evaluation, training, and

mentoring that enhance and elevate the teaching profession. We support state funding for professional development and in-service programs that may be conducted beyond the 180-day school year.

### **Re-examine Use of Student Assessments**

ISBA opposes using a nationally recognized college entrance exam as the chosen high school assessment for accountability purposes. We believe this assessment does not have “currency” for all students as it will be just one of nine postsecondary-ready competency options to graduate under the new Pathways system. Because this will be considered a “low-stakes assessment” for a significant portion of the high school student population, school corporations and schools may be unfairly judged in the accountability system based on this metric.

### **Protect School Calendar/Instructional Time**

The ISBA supports the current 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 the current flexibility to adjust the beginning and closing hour of the school day due to student safety concerns.

The ISBA supports the current legislative mandate to conduct a minimum of student instructional time and believes the local board of education should retain the authority to determine the best method for meeting the

instructional day requirements. The ISBA supports the current flexibility to use e-learning days when deemed appropriate by local school officials.

### **Seek Rigorous School Accountability Measures for All Schools**

The grading of a school corporation and individual schools should be easy to understand through the use of metrics that are transparent and well-defined. Much thought was put into the type of grade to use. The A-F grading system was selected because of the apparent ease of understanding by the citizens and taxpayers of the state. The same should hold true for the metrics used in the calculation of the A-F grades.

ISBA contends there is a better approach than the current or proposed accountability rule governed by the State Board of Education. While these accountability rule options meet legislative mandate and reflect some useful metrics, students and citizens would be better served if we moved to a data dashboard system or an enhanced annual performance report already made available and published annually. Parents and the general public have the ability to discern high-quality schools when given multiple data measures to consider.

Regardless of which metrics are used for the school accountability system, all schools receiving state tuition support dollars (including charter schools and voucher schools) 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 needed for

financial accountability, and access to public records for charter and voucher schools. Dollars flowing to charter schools and Indiana Choice Scholarship voucher schools should be separately itemized in the state budget and funded outside the state tuition support formula for public schools. Taxpayers deserve full transparency on the level of their tax dollars being spent on these programs.

Finally, the state should explore additional oversight rules and sanctions to govern virtual charter schools to ensure that fraud and financial waste do not continue as has been documented by the State Board of Accounts.

### **Oppose Vouchers**

ISBA recognizes and commends the efforts of public schools' to fulfill the unique constitutional duty to educate every child and opposes any further expansion of voucher programs that largely support students never enrolled in public education. The ISBA supports requiring schools that participate in voucher programs to admit students on a nondiscriminatory basis and to adhere to the same academic and financial accountability metrics as public schools. State funds for the Indiana Choice Scholarship Program should only be used for instruction aligned to Indiana Academic Standards.

### **Oppose Tax Credits**

The ISBA opposes any further expansion of the tax credit laws to fund school scholarships for enrollment in

private schools, including the creation of Education Savings Accounts.

### **Support Career and Technical Education (CTE)**

ISBA believes the career and technical education (CTE) should empower student choice of career exploration, development of transferable skills, and life-long learning to support career pathway agility and success.

Secondary CTE courses should not narrowly focus on filling short-term needs of business and industry that are entry-level low-wage, basic jobs. Policymakers and state agency leaders should support fiscal and administrative policies to incentivize renewal in CTE cooperation between school corporations and employers as well as to help with the purchase of new equipment.

# Notes



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