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The Illinois General Assembly's deadline for moving bills out of committee was last Friday. The passing of this deadline reduces the number of bills we are watching and brings focus to the remainder of the legislative session.

There were also a number of budgetary developments last week. Governor Quinn delivered his budget address: the main element called for making the 2011 income tax increase (from 3 to 5 percent) permanent. Governor Quinn claimed that making the tax increase permanent would provide relief from approved revenue estimates for Fiscal Year 2015 that show about a \$2.2 billion decline in operating resources. The approved revenue estimate, sharply disputed by Senate Republicans, is being blamed on the partial sunset of the 2011 tax increase on January 1, 2015 – in the middle of the next fiscal year. If the revenue estimates hold and the tax increase sunsets, Governor Quinn claims there will need to be significant cuts throughout the state budget. We cannot be sure how the legislature will react to Governor Quinn's proposals, but we will keep you informed.

In last month's newsletter, we broke down legislation into three categories: (1) appropriations, (2) regulation and (3) school choice. We will keep that framework.

APPROPRIATIONS

HB 4573 & SB 2938 – These are CCI drafted bills appropriating \$12.5 million to the Textbook Block Grant. The House sponsor is Representative Kelly Burke, and the Senate Sponsor is Senator Bill Cunningham. As we move further into the session and the state's budget begins to come together, we will send out more information, including action alerts, on these bills. A lot will depend on how the Governor's budget address is received. **CCI supports these bills.**

REGULATION

SB 2934 – This bill would allow the Illinois Emergency Management Agency (IEMA) to make school security grants to public schools, K-12. CCI engaged IEMA representatives and the bill's sponsor, and they agreed to an amendment allowing IEMA to also make school security grants to nonpublic schools, K-12. The amendment was adopted on March 20th and passed the State Government Administration Committee by a vote of 9 to 0 on March 21st. **CCI supports this legislation.**

SB 2710 – CCI negotiated this bill with ISBE. It requires state recognized nonpublic schools to hold an annual meeting to review the school's crisis plan. ISBE attempted a similar effort through administrative rule last year without regard to the nature of nonpublic schools. We pushed that effort back and replaced it with this negotiated bill. The bill passed the Senate Education Committee unanimously on February 19th, and on March 20th an amendment was approved to

stipulate that no individual or agency could charge a school for participating in the review. **CCI supports the legislation.**

HB 4262 – This bill effectively removes the requirement that new school employees undergo a TB test. The bill passed the full House on March 5th. **CCI supports the legislation.**

HB 3724 – This bill requires health education in secondary schools to include training on how to properly administer cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and how to use an automated external defibrillator. **CCI is monitoring this legislation.**

HB 5892 – This bill provides for the administration of undesignated epinephrine auto-injectors (undesignated = owned by the school) by a pupil, school nurse, and trained personnel. The bill also requires a school to permit the self-administration and self-carry of asthma medication. (The law already allows this for epinephrine auto-injectors.) The bill does not mandate that a school carry undesignated epinephrine auto-injectors or train school personnel. The bill would simply allow for it. If undertaken, the bill stipulates designated personnel must submit to the school's administration proof of completion of a training curriculum to recognize and respond to anaphylaxis. CCI engaged the sponsor of the bill to ensure the liability protections for staff were improved, and they have agreed to an amendment. This allows for (but does not mandate) quicker application of needed medicine and now provides strong liability protections. **CCI is monitoring this legislation.**

SCHOOL CHOICE

CCI continues to coordinate with Ed Choice Illinois (formerly Freedom to Learn) and the Illinois Policy Institute (IPI) in efforts to support school choice. Ed Choice Illinois has asked us to sign on to their statement or principles in education reform, and we are working through the appropriate language.

In the meantime, none of the school choice bills introduced this year passed committee by the deadline. We are really focusing with Ed Choice Illinois on building a coalition of support that is necessary for any success in the legislature. Last Friday, Ed Choice Illinois held their first policy roundtable, known as Club Ed, in Chicago, and we participated. Our hope and intent is for this effort to grow.

We also note the advance of a school choice bill in New York. This is the first statewide school choice bill to gain any traction in a state with a political profile similar to Illinois since our 2010 voucher bill passed the State Senate. The New York bill provides tax credits for donations made to public schools, school districts, and nonprofit organizations serving public schools; and for donations to non-profit scholarship organizations. For private and religious schools, encouraging more charitable donations for student scholarships will enable low-income and middle-class families to choose the education they desire for their children and prevent further school closures in neighborhoods and communities throughout our state. The bill is an interesting, politically adroit model we are watching closely.

I-CAN

Illinois Catholic Advocacy Network (I-CAN) – CCI has adopted this technology to improve our advocacy efforts in Springfield across the board. Our Principal and Legislative Action Person (LAP) email lists are now housed in this database and our action alerts are better designed and MUCH

easier to act on. In fact, after receiving an action alert through the I-CAN network, you will now be able to send a pre-drafted email to your state representative and state senator in as little as three clicks and under a minute.

I-CAN is a grassroots advocacy email network, and the best news is you do not have to be a principal or LAP to sign up for I-CAN. If you care about Catholic schools (or any other issues the Church speaks on), you can sign up today and be an informed and active participant. When signing up for I-CAN you will be asked for both an email address and home address so we can pinpoint your state lawmakers. You will also be allowed to sign up for specific issue areas, so that you can receive alerts on issues you care about and not for those you don't.

Please go to <http://capwiz.com/ilcatholic/mlm/signup/>, and fill out the form. CCI does the rest.

In addition to signing up for I-CAN, LAPs should be focused on building a relationship between your school and your state legislators, in the House and Senate. Because there are a lot of bad voting records out there, I do not recommend holding events awarding legislators, but having your state representative and state senator into your school for a tour, so they can witness the good and essential work being done there, is always a good idea. Please contact me if you need any help with this.

Thank you for all your continued help and support.

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