



65 E. Wacker Place
Suite 1620
Chicago, IL 60601
Ph. 312-368-1066
Fx. 312-368-1090

108 E. Cook St.
Springfield, IL 62704
Ph. 217-528-9200
Fx. 217-528-7214

www.ilcatholic.org
Diocese of Belleville
Archdiocese of Chicago
Diocese of Joliet
Diocese of Peoria
Diocese of Rockford
Diocese of Springfield-in-IL

In the spring legislative session, approximately 3,300 bills were introduced. CCI reviewed all of these bills, and determined which bills required monitoring and/or active involvement. Throughout the spring, we lobbied bills to either pass, modify or defeat them. We did this in many issue areas, including education.

The outcomes of the spring session are graded by most as incomplete. Despite the Governor's urging, the legislature did not make the 2011 tax increase permanent. Still, many believe this effort will be taken up again after the election and before the tax increase expires on January 1, 2015. CCI has not advocated for making the tax increase permanent.

Failing to extend the tax increase did require some budgetary twists in order to avoid major spending cuts in the Fiscal Year 2015 budget. Monies from a number of dedicated funds were funneled into other areas, pay increases and health care contributions for state workers were not appropriated and a one-time spring revenue bump was diverted from paying back bills in order to pass a so-called flat budget. These maneuvers may get Illinois through Fiscal Year 2015 without major cuts, but they are not repeatable, so many questions on taxing and spending remain.

Focusing on education-related legislation, what we are interested in can be broken down into three categories: (1) appropriations, (2) regulation and (3) school choice. Here is how the bill list looked in those categories.

APPROPRIATIONS

As mentioned, the Fiscal Year 15 education budget was classified as a "flat" budget. Lawmakers actually added about \$118 million to education spending, but this will be used to maintain the 89 percent proration of General State Aid. The education budget also included:

- level funding for Regular/Vocational transportation, which is estimated to be about 72 percent of transportation claims;
- zero funding for many line items, including Longitudinal Data Systems, Homeless Education, Diversified Educator Recruitment, Low Income AP programs, the Board-recommended mentoring programs, and the Textbook Block Grant; and
- level funding for Early Childhood at \$300 million.

We were again unsuccessful in our attempts to fund the Textbook Block Grant. In a meeting with the Governor's staff it was intimated that our support for making the tax increase permanent could help the cause. It was also suggested that we could pursue some sort of trade off with the Education Expense Tax Credit to fund the program. We declined both of these (at best, uncertain) proposals.

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. The appropriations failed. CCI supported 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. The bill was approved by the entire Senate on April 1st. The bill passed the House unanimously on May 9th, and it will be sent to the Governor. CCI supported 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. The bill was approved by the entire Senate on April 1st. The bill passed the House unanimously on May 8th, and it will be sent to the Governor. CCI supported 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, the Senate on May 20th, and it will be sent to the Governor. CCI supported 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. The bill passed the House on April 1st, the Senate on May 20th, and it will be sent to the Governor. CCI monitored the 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 school nurse or other trained personnel can administer the undesignated epi-pens to students with plans or prescriptions on file or to any student the nurse or trained personnel believes in good faith is having an anaphylactic reaction. 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 agreed to an amendment. In summary, this bill allows for (but does not mandate) quicker application of needed medicine and now provides strong liability protections. The bill passed committee on March 26th and the full House on April 10th. The bill passed the Senate on May 28th, and it will be sent to the Governor. CCI supported the amended bill.

Bullying – I have received a number of questions about the anti-bullying bills enacted in previous years and this year. All of those bills apply to public and nonsectarian private schools – meaning

they do not apply to religious schools. Our dioceses all implement their own anti-bullying initiatives, but we are not subject to the state mandates.

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. In March, Ed Choice Illinois held their first policy roundtable, known as Club Ed, in Chicago, and we participated. Their second event is June 13th in Chicago, and we are again participating. Our hope and intent is for this effort to grow.

STATE RECOGNITION

CCI worked closely with ISBE, through the Nonpublic School Advisory Committee, to conduct a “surge” of state recognition visits to nonpublic schools during this school year. We were able to secure state funding for this effort. Retired educators and administrators (from primarily nonpublic schools) were contracted for one year in an effort to wipe out or greatly reduce the backlog in school visits and get the program up to date. We tried to coordinate visits for all schools that had not been visited since 2007 or before, so as to get back into the appropriate seven-year visit cycle. Over 300 nonpublic schools were visited year, and the program appears to be on track to successfully reset the entire cycle. We have received assurances from ISBE that they will make their best effort to maintain the visit cycle going forward, including engaging contractors in future years if necessary.

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 support – enjoy the summer!

Zach Wichmann
Director of Government Relations
Catholic Conference of Illinois
wichmann@ilcatholic.org
217-528-9200