



March 2015 Newsletter



This Year's Legislative Session In Overtime

We Are Nearing The End

This year's legislative session has been a long one. May 1 was supposed to be the last day and legislators are now working without per diem expenses and on an as-needed basis at the Capitol until the budget bills are completed.

The last few weeks have been very slow. Some progress has been made on the budget bills and most are in conference committee now to work out a compromise between the House and Senate versions of each bill but public education funding is still a major hang-up. Republicans have proposed a \$100 million increase in public school spending and the Democrats have proposed a \$200 million increase. Just this week, bills were introduced in the House to attempt to bridge the gap and are working their way through the process in committee.

Until the public school funding issue is settled and the chambers have time to work through some of the other budget bills, legislators are only coming in on days when they need to vote to move a bill forward or a committee is meeting they are assigned to.

As the budget process continues to unfold, we'll be working to support Iowa Advocates for Choice in Education (Iowa ACE's lobbying/political organization) and our friends at the Iowa Catholic Conference as we look for ways to restore chronically underfunded appropriations for our schools and look to expand school choice options. Keep an eye on your inboxes for updates or action alerts!

Independent Accreditation Update

We asked legislators in both chambers to include language in any number of possible bills that would make Independent Accreditation permanent in Iowa. The House chose to put the language in the education appropriations bill. The Senate replaced the entire bill with their version and the bill is now in conference committee.

We have broad, bi-partisan support and have heard of no concerns from legislators or anyone else about the efficacy of the program. Although one Senator indicated a desire to wait on removing the sunset to evaluate how our independent accreditation has worked, we are hopeful that the conference committee as a whole will choose to keep our language in the bill.

Independent Accreditation is meaningful, it's working well, and is more aligned with the options afforded to nonpublic schools in every other State.

Rest assured that removing the sunset provision on Independent Accreditation is our number one priority. As the process unfolds, we'll send out updates to our school administrators and as the session comes to a close, we'll send out another newsletter to summarize this effort along with a summary of the legislative session as a whole and how it will affect Christian Schools statewide.

IACS Appearances

Thank you to Des Moines Christian, Pella Christian Grade School, and others for having us in your classrooms or allowing us to speak to your kids at the Capitol.

Let us know if we can be helpful in the classroom or events. Our lobbyist would also be happy to meet you and address your students during field trips to the Capitol. We are here for you!

Other Updates

There are a number of other issues we are working on or watching this session. Here are just a few:

School Start Date - We are extremely pleased with the cooperation and efforts of public and private school interests in trying to protect local control in education decisions. We still believe that elected school boards and private school families are the only appropriate place for such decisions.

Although extremely disappointed with the way things unfolded during the debate on this issue, we are hearing from most of our members schools that the Aug. 23 date will be workable for most of our schools. Please let us know if you have concerns or run into issues on innovated calendars, etc. moving forward.

Tax Credits - We will support any efforts by Iowa ACE and legislators to make positive changes to the number of STO tax credits and/or expand the Tuition & Textbook Tax Credit programs.

Transportation & Textbook Funding - These two line-items in the budget fund public schools for the purpose of assisting nonpublic schools to provide needed transportation and textbooks/technology to our students. It is an ongoing effort to get them fully funded.

IACS Board Update - David De Jong at Pella Christian Grade School has stepped down from the IACS Board and Craig Rapinchuk from Peoria Christian School has agreed to serve the remainder of his term. Thank you, David, for your service! We appreciate you!

IACS Board Of Directors

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Randy Ten Pas — Vice President
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