
Indiana State Teachers Association

Legislative Summary

2019



Our kids. Our schools. Our future.

2019 ISTA Legislative Summary

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Message from the President

The 2019 legislative session has come to an end and I want to thank our members for advocating for our profession, students and public education - you made a difference!

With your help, the increases in the 2020 - 2021 budget for public schools are the largest in 11 years. While this is progress, we still have work ahead of us, particularly for our rural schools. Policymakers remain unwilling to expand revenue to address long-term public education funding issues and teacher pay. And we must keep fighting to make sure educators' pay reflects the profession and that our students - no matter their ZIP code - receive a quality public education.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Teresa Meredith".

Teresa Meredith
ISTA President



SCHOOL FINANCE

HB 1001 (Rep. Todd Huston, R-Fishers) Biennial Budget

Lawmakers funded K – 12 public education at a level not seen in 11 years. That said, more work is needed to close the gap that exists in teacher compensation relative to Indiana’s neighboring states. Because of the way in which Indiana’s funding formula operates, too many school districts end up with net cuts to funding. Districts that meet or exceed inflation also have fallen behind. It is still the case and will still be the case that educators routinely pay for what should be considered classroom essentials from their own pockets. Indiana can and must do better for its teachers and students.

- **Tuition support:** 2.5 percent statewide average tuition support increases each of the next two years.
- **Regular education funding:** 2.5 percent statewide average increases each of the next two years.
- **Per student foundation:** Increases in the per student foundation to \$5,548 in first year (3.6 percent increase) and \$5,709 in second year (2.8 percent increase).
- **Post-1996 Teacher Retirement Fund (TRF) Pension:** \$150 million in post-1996 Teacher Retirement Fund (TRF) pension funding from the state’s budget surplus to pay down the post-1995 TRF account, having the effect of increasing dollars at the local level to put more money on the table for bargaining salaries and wage issues (equivalent to an average of 1 percent per year increase in tuition support).
- **Complexity index:** Embeds complexity funding into regular education funding, providing \$3,650 per student in first year and \$3,675 in second year plus an added tier available to certain school districts of an additional \$128 per student.
- **Kindergarten funding change:** For local school districts that permit students to enroll in Kindergarten prior to turning five years of age by Aug. 1, includes them in ADM funding if they turn five years of age by Sept. 1, 2019 or by Oct. 1, 2020.

- **Two student counts per year:** Opposed by ISTA, two student counts per year passed. Increases instability in budgeting and programming midway through the school year and creates a second window for private voucher schools.
- **Teacher Appreciation Grants:** \$37.5 million for Teacher Appreciation Grants in each of the next two years, increased from \$30 million each year. Includes a focus on allocating some supplemental funds to teachers with fewer than five years' experience.
- **English Language (EL) programs:** Increased EL programs to \$22.5 million each of the next two years, with the focus of new money going to Levels 1 and 2 EL programs (\$487 in year 1 and \$430 in year 2). Levels 3 and 4 will remain at \$300 per student.
- **Special Education:** Maintained funding levels at severe, mild and moderate, and homebound/communications tiers.
- **Preschool Special Education:** Increased preschool special education for the first time since 1991 from \$2,750 per student to \$2,875 in first year and \$3,000 in second year.
- **School Safety Grant:** Nearly doubled to \$19 million each of the next two years, with an avenue to provide mental health and social and emotional supports for kids.
- **Career Ladder pilot program:** Received \$3.5 million over the biennium.
- **Teacher Residency pilot:** Received \$1 million over the biennium.
- **Retiree Stipend, or 13th check:** Included and valued on a sliding scale depending upon how long ago the person retired (\$150 to \$450). Hoosier public employees and public-school teachers have not seen a cost-of-living pension benefit increase in 10 years and that dynamic continues.
- **Vouchers:** Creates a new 70 percent voucher based upon family income eligibility at 125 percent of free or reduced-price lunch program. Increased the state cap for tax credits for contributions to scholarship granting organizations from \$14 million a year to \$15 million in first year and \$16.5 million in second year.
- **Charter and Innovation Schools Grant:** Increased charter and innovation schools grant from \$15 million a year to \$22.5 million a year (from \$500 per student to \$750 per student).
- **Dual Credit:** Maintained line item funding for dual credit at the various state colleges (rather than folding this funding into general operations) and urges the creation of a study committee by the Indiana Commission for Higher Education (CHE) to track the progress made in getting dual credit teachers eligible under the Learning Commission's new licensing guidelines.

**HB 1003 (Rep. Dale Devon, R-South Bend)
School corporation expenditure targets**

The bill requires each school corporation to report detailed amounts in its proposed budget that will be transferred from the education fund to the operation fund. It establishes a target of 85 percent to be used in the education fund and requires a school corporation to include in its budget hearing an explanation of why a transfer of more than 15 percent to the operations fund would be used.

Requires the Indiana Education Employment Relations Board to report annually to the budget committee and legislative council including, at minimum, the following, : 1. data on the number of teachers and administrators in each school corporation, 2. average salaries and total compensation, 3. benchmarked salary data for years of experience compared to neighboring states, 4. retention data and 5. enrollment data for teacher preparation programs.

The Indiana Department of Education (IDOE) must identify and report to the Office of Management and Budget those schools that transfer more than 15 percent to the operations fund beginning in 2020. IDOE may also require a school corporation to present information to the fiscal indicators committee at a public meeting.

ISTA supported HB 1003 as part of its legislative agenda. The bill is a first step and another tool for longer-term strategies to increase teacher salaries statewide. It will provide useful fiscal data with the intent of maximizing dollars in the education fund that can be directed into the classroom.

**HB 1008 (Rep. Bob Behning, R-Indianapolis)
Teacher career ladders**

The bill establishes a grant program to provide teachers with additional opportunities to grow professionally through leadership roles, while remaining in the classroom. Such programs include the Teacher Advancement Model (TAP) and models supported by the National Education Association and offer incentives to stay in the profession. ISTA supports the idea of providing teachers with more flexible options for professional growth. The bill was part of ISTA's legislative agenda.

**HB 1009 (Rep. Dale Devon, R-South Bend)
Teacher residency grant pilot program**

Establishes a grant pilot program to provide teacher residencies. The Commission for Higher Education will administer grants to school corporations and charter schools. A corporation receiving a grant must partner with a postsecondary institution and set up a program to assist beginning teachers. Participating teachers will receive a stipend for mentoring duties.

ISTA supports teacher residencies and the additional dollars, resources and supports the programs will provide to beginning teachers. This bill was part of ISTA's legislative agenda.

HB 1021 (Rep. Jeff Thompson, R-Lebanon)
Property tax caps/circuit breakers

As introduced, HB 1021 would have continued the availability of the “protected taxes waiver” for 98 school districts that have had circuit breaker losses greater than 10 percent in their transportation funds (now associated with their operations fund).

The waiver enables qualifying school districts to reallocate these losses into their respective debt service funds, which are outside of the property tax cap limitations.

This bill was amended in the Senate to phase out this relief altogether over five years resulting in fewer school districts being eligible to take advantage of the waiver from year to year. The bill was presented in conference committee and the compromise between the versions provides a phase-out of the relief only for those school districts that have circuit breaker losses between the 10 and 20 percent threshold and for those districts with losses greater than 20 percent (rather than the current 10 percent), they can continue to reallocate those losses to debt service—unchanged through 2023. Currently, about 20 percent of the districts, while eligible for this relief, have voluntarily elected not to take it.

While ISTA supported the original House version and opposed the complete phase out of protected waivers, the final version will dramatically reduce the number of districts negatively affected by the complete phase-out.

HB 1397 (Rep. Tony Cook, R-Cicero)
Teacher evaluation and contracts

The bill allows one-year-at-a-time transfers of monies from operations to education funds before Sept. 15 to bolster the amount of money available to negotiate contracts. The school corporation must submit a copy of its resolution to the Indiana Department of Local Government and Finance, which must state whether the transfer is for funding teacher contracts. HB 1397 is a positive, incremental step toward recognizing the importance of local bargaining.

HB 1628 (Rep. Bob Behning, R-Indianapolis)
Pre-K funding

Expands the pre-K program eligibility statewide to all counties from the original pilot program. The bill does not include an appropriation for *new* pre-K dollars but will provide more flexibility to more effectively utilize available money for income-eligible families.

SB 127 (Sen. Travis Holdman, R-Markle)
School safety referendum

Allows a school corporation to adopt a resolution providing for a school safety referendum, which requires approval by a majority of voters. A school safety referendum could not be imposed for more than eight years but could be extended. If a school safety referendum is approved in a calendar year, another safety referendum may not be considered on the ballot the following year. A corporation may not simultaneously impose more than one safety referendum. School administrators may advocate for a position on a safety referendum as long as the advocacy occurs outside of the school day and does not use public funds.

The bill also establishes purposes for which safety referendum funds can be used and requires the school board to set up a safety referendum debt service fund. Only one school safety referendum may be placed on the ballot within a three-year period.

Expands the allowance for a school corporation or charter to use a matching grant from the secured school fund to provide a threat response, including the use of firearms training and self-defense training determined by the school.

SB 549 (Sen. Victoria Spartz, R-Noblesville)
School finance reporting

Requires reporting of certain school financial information to the local board of finance for the corporation, including fiscal indicators of a corporation's financial conditions. Urges an interim study committee to consider best practices for governance structure and tax increment financing, increased transparency and collaboration between local government units.

SB 606 (Sen. Jeff Raatz, R-Richmond)
Teacher salaries

SB 606 raises the 33 1/3 percent provision to a 50 percent cap required when negotiating teachers' years of experience and recognition of additional content area hours and degrees. The bill also allows existing teachers to receive comparable increases to what beginning teachers may receive upon entering the profession to recognize value in experience. This provision could help retention and reduce district-shopping among more experienced teachers. ISTA supports this as a positive first step but advocated for the removal of percentage caps altogether.

TEACHING/LICENSING

SB 438 (Sen. Andy Zay, R-Huntington) Alternative accountability/licensure

Reduces the number of hours of experience in a content area required for the career specialist permit from 6,000 clock hours to 4,000 hours.

Requires the IDOE to enter into the National Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification Interstate Agreement.

Requires the Commission for Higher Education to set up a dual credit advisory council to ensure that accreditation requirements are met by the 2022 deadline.

Removes the requirement that an individual obtaining an initial practitioner's license must take the Core Academic Skills Assessment (CASA) exam.

Allows the State Board of Education to create a model aligning performance evaluation plan criteria.

SCHOOL SAFETY/MENTAL HEALTH

HB 1004 (Rep. Wendy-McNamara, R-Evansville) School Safety

Expands the use of Indiana Secured School Fund matching grants to "harden" schools, including employing a law enforcement officer. A charter school and nonaccredited public school may also receive grants but a virtual school is not eligible for these funds. Each school corporation, charter and accredited nonpublic school must certify by July 1, 2021, that it has conducted a threat assessment for each building. Requires that at least one mandated drill per year be an active shooter drill.

ISTA supports increased funding for school safety. However, the bill was significantly amended during the legislative process to remove mental health and trauma-informed approach language, as well as the implementation of a mental health survey that could help identify specific problem areas among student populations unique to a school building or school district. Additionally, the bill previously contained language protecting school employees from being shot with projectiles during active shooter drills, but this was removed in the final version. Some of the mental health provisions ended up in SB 325.

HB 1063 (Rep. Randy Frye, R-Greensburg)
School safety equipment

The bill requires school corporations and charter schools to provide a "Stop the Bleed" program, which would use training and bleeding control kits in schools. The bill also provides civil liability immunity for employees who use the kit during an incident. It is part of a wider school safety effort that was spread over several bills this session.

HB 1224 (Rep. Chuck Goodrich, R-Noblesville)
School intergenerational safety pilot

The bill sets up a pilot program to allow individuals over at least 55 years of age to assist with students to increase school safety and provide mentoring and positive development through intergenerational relationship building.

HB 1225 (Rep. Greg Steurwald, R-Avon)
Safe schools

Establishes grants from the Indiana Secured School Fund to assist in early alert systems for school corporations, charter schools and accredited nonpublic schools. Grants may be used to install an active event warning system such as closed-circuit cameras and electronic access for law enforcement.

HB 1398 (Rep. Tony Cook, R-Cicero)
Information for threats to school safety

The bill requires law enforcement to share investigation records with a school corporation, charter or nonpublic school if the offense is deemed to pose a threat to school safety. The bill maintains privacy and confidentiality for other information such as student grades. It also allows a school corporation to share certain information with law enforcement in cases of emergency. Civil liability immunity is provided to individuals who disclose student information.

SB 2 (Sen. Randy Head, R-Logansport)
School bus safety

SB 2 adds additional penalties, including suspension of driver's license, for drivers who fail to heed engaged school bus stop arms.

Requires the distribution of information for how an individual or school may petition to reduce the maximum speed limit in locations to ensure safe loading and unloading of students.

This bill includes language that allows a court to assess a fee and other penalties to an individual convicted of recklessly passing a school bus when the stop arm is extended. It also allows for local reimbursement, upon petition and approval, for the purchase of certain bus safety equipment including cameras. ISTA supports the bill as part of its legislative priorities.

**SB 325 (Sen. Michael Crider, R-Greenfield)
Student mental health**

The bill expands eligibility for grants through the Indiana Secured School Fund and establishes a new grant for parental and student support services. Urges an interim study committee be created to study schools that have used trauma-informed approaches and community partnerships that have been successful in providing improved mental health and care for students. Supporting trauma-informed care initiatives is one of ISTA's legislative priorities.

**SB 632 (Sen. Eric Bassler, R-Washington)
Radon in schools**

Requires best practices approved by the Indiana Department of Health to improve air quality in schools. Requires distribution of a manual with recommendations.

GENERAL SCHOOL POLICY

**HB 1002 (Rep. Holli Sullivan, R-Evansville)
CTE/workforce development**

This bill is a comprehensive Career and Technical Education (CTE)/workforce bill making sweeping changes. The bill makes changes to the Governor's Workforce Cabinet and certain grant eligibility. The bill adds supplemental pay for certain eligible CTE teachers, again carving out monies for segments of educators, non-bargainable and causing fewer dollars available to be bargained for all educators.

Under the bill, teachers in traditional public schools, using a Professional Growth Plan (PGP) for renewing their license, will be required to complete 15 of the 90 PGP points in one or more of a series of program options, including an externship, focused on career navigation or economic development. There is no distinction drawn in the language pertaining to relevancy to what one teaches. This would apply to every elementary teacher and high school CTE teachers. The state has not studied nor possesses any data as to what externship opportunities exist across the state, or their quality. The breadth, compliance timeframe, relevancy, equal availability of programs and number of hours required are all reasons to be concerned with this new requirement.

The bill also sets up a study of post-graduation tracking requirements that would link school accountability to what students may or may not do following graduation – a concept that died in multiple bills throughout session. While this idea will not be implemented, the study of this topic signals lawmakers are interested in pursuing this idea – an idea that ISTA strongly opposes.

The bill also added elements of SB 420 (which died) to allow contributions to a new entity called an Industry Collaboration Organization (ICO) for career counseling programs and enhancement of CTE training programs, apprenticeships and work-based learning programs. Grants may also be used to provide for transportation of students to these programs to meet graduation pathway requirements. ICO tax credit language was removed, which would have further reduced revenue vital to the operation of public schools.

The final version also added language from SB 532, which had died, to require that the state board adopt no later than July 1, 2020, a new teacher licensing exam. There have been validity questions raised about the existing exam due to abnormally low passage rates on certain content sections. The new exam must be administered by September 1, 2021.

HB 1002 also does the following:

- Resurrects language from another bill that died, SB 93, establishing the “Let Indiana Work for You” program to provide information to college graduates about work opportunities in Indiana.
- Removes a requirement that a high school vocational program teacher is licensed by the IDOE if certain occupational and training requirements are met.
- Allows a high school to count an approved work-based learning course, program or experience to meet diploma requirements with a CORE 40 or other honors designation.
- Sets up an accountability panel to study aligning accountability with graduation pathway requirements and new performance indicators.

**HB 1005 (Rep. Brian Bosma, R-Indianapolis)
State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

This bill moves up the date for the appointment of the State Superintendent of Public Instruction by the governor to January 2021. When Dr. Jennifer McCormick indicated an unwillingness to seek re-election, the General Assembly acted to move the date up from 2025 to 2021.

ISTA has consistently recognized the importance of this office directly benefitting and being accountable to Hoosier voters and opposed this move.

**HB 1060 (Rep. Steve Bartels, R-Eckerty)
School operations levy**

Allows an increase in the maximum operations fund levy specifically for the North Spencer County School Corporation.

**HB 1089 (Rep. Jeff Thompson, R-Lebanon)
Education matters**

Requires a school corporation to admit a transfer student who does not have legal settlement if the student’s parent is employed at the school and has an annual salary of at least \$8,000.

Requires seizure awareness training for certain school employees. A school corporation must also meet requirements for a student’s seizure treatment plan if a health provider has established a plan for the student.

The plan must be met by a school nurse or nurse’s designee. Requires the IDOE to identify resources for schools to implement health plans for students with seizure disorders.

HB 1209 (Rep. Schaibley, R-Carmel)
Discipline of coaches

Requires the IDOE to notify the Indiana High School Athletic Association (IHSAA) of any instances of license revocation or suspension of a licensed teacher convicted of misconduct or offenses. A school must report convictions involving nonteaching and volunteer coaches. An applicant must also be questioned about prior suspensions or revocations before being hired at a school and must submit references. Coaches must undergo a criminal history background check. Provides civil liability immunity for the IHSAA and employees, IDOE and employees and a school corporation and employees for any action unless the action was a result of gross negligence or willful misconduct.

HB 1245 (Rep. Heidi Sullivan, R-Evansville)
Higher education matters

Makes changes to the names of several private higher education institutions. Requires the Commission for Higher Education to provide the names of students who have filed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) if the high school has entered into an agreement with the Commission for Higher Education.

HB 1400 (Rep. Tony Cook, R-Cicero)
Education mandates

Urges the creation of an interim study committee to examine the wide range of teacher training mandates and other school policies over the next several years from 2019 through 2022. Each interim will focus on a particular topic, including 1. reduction and streamlining of school mandates; 2. streamlining of fiscal compliance reporting; 3. professional development policies and curriculum requirements and 4. the costs and benefits of virtual schools.

ISTA worked to improve this bill from its original version, which would have immediately repealed entire sections from the Indiana Code including many trainings and policies that have passed the General Assembly just in the past few years.

HB 1443 (Rep. Tim Brown, R-Crawfordsville)
Task force on schools for the deaf and blind

The bill establishes a task force to determine a plan for the Indiana School for the Deaf and Indiana School for the Blind or Visually Impaired, namely whether to combine campuses, renovate existing buildings and/or build new schools.

HB 1484 (Rep. Ed Clere, R-New Albany)
Language development for children who are deaf

Sets up an advisory committee under the director for the Center for Deaf and Hard of Hearing Education Center. The center must establish language milestones for parents as a resource, approve assessments for children and prepare data collection and reporting. Requires the advisory committee to collaborate for making recommendations on the language milestones and approval of assessments. A review must be conducted every five years. The Family and Social Services Administration may administer the assessment annually to a child less than three years of age and is deaf or hard of hearing, and each school corporation may administer the assessment to a child between ages three and eleven years old. A parent may opt out of the assessment.

HB 1627 (Rep. Bob Behning, R-Indianapolis)
Curriculum/coalition schools

Allows a coalition school to replace certain high school courses with courses in the same subject with equal or greater rigor that would count toward a diploma. This allows coalition schools to substitute algebra requirements with applied math in the case of certain work-study opportunities for students, although it would apply to other subjects as well. A parent would have to sign a waiver acknowledging that certain course alternatives may be insufficient for admission into some postsecondary institutions. ISTA opposed the substitution of courses taught by potentially unlicensed teachers.

HB 1629 (Rep. Bob Behning, R-Indianapolis)
Various education matters

This omnibus bill contains several miscellaneous provisions:

- Prohibits a school from charging for electronic records requests for up to the first five hours, although a fee may be charged if the workload extends beyond that limit. This does not apply to certain information requested by the exclusive representative for collective bargaining purposes.
- Changes the definition of an elementary school, which may open up some schools with certain grade combinations to be eligible for vouchers.
- Allows a school corporation to extend a community service ethic for grades nine through 12.
- Requires a school board that operates a CTE center admit students who attend a charter school or accredited nonpublic school when tuition is paid for that student. Admissions must not result in denial of placement for a student enrolled in the corporation.
- Expands the Employment Aid Readiness Network Indiana program to secondary schools.
- Requires IDOE to provide voice and reader accommodations to students on state assessments (ILEARN) as part of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP), service plan or choice scholarship education plan.
- Requires the state board to investigate whether IEPs were changed to align with a state assessment.
- Requires the Commission for Higher Education to provide notice of the FAFSA and requires each school corporation to distribute the notice (the original bill required completion of the FAFSA form to graduate).

- Establishes an Education Dispute Resolution working group. Requires training for mediators, hearing officers and judges.
- Requires the state board to develop alternative performance indicators and accountability standards for schools focusing primarily on students with special needs.
- Prohibits an individual who initiates a lawsuit against a school from representing an individual or entity without disclosing conflicts of interest.
- Removes mental health services and social emotional services from the authorized money in the secured schools safety grant.

**HB 1630 (Rep. Bob Behning, R-Indianapolis)
Innovation network schools**

HB 1630 provides that an innovation network school or a charter school that reconstitutes as an innovation network school after June 30, 2019, may not use student growth as the exclusive means to measure school accountability. While a small step, this helps to level the accountability playing field between innovation network schools and neighborhood public schools. New charter schools only – ones that completely reconstitute with significantly different student and staff composition – may receive a null grade.

The state board may approve a new school identification number. Establishes criteria for a school to request a new identification number.

Adds Cambridge International exams as a postsecondary readiness competency as a graduation pathway approved by the state board. Requires the state board to approve benchmarks or formative or interim assessments for identifying students in need of remediation. Prohibits the use of a single vendor for the assessments.

**HB 1641 (Rep. Bob Behning, R-Indianapolis)
Charter schools**

This omnibus charter school bill contains several provisions:

- Increases the number of members on the Indiana Charter Board and makes changes for quorum requirements.
- Makes provisions for admissions of students who are siblings of student alumni.
- Reduces the time a vacant school building must remain open to an interested charter.
- Makes specific provisions regarding the sale and use of Broad Ripple High School in Indianapolis.

The bill originally had language requiring proportionate referenda dollars to be allocated to charters within a school district that passes a referendum. ISTA supports referenda dollars going solely to community-based public schools, as this is one of the remaining options to supplement funding to support public schools since the General Assembly took over school funding in 2008.

SB 29 (Sen. Michael Bohacek)
School materials for juvenile detainees

Requires a school corporation to provide curricular materials to students who are detained in a juvenile detention facility for more than seven calendar days if a student's parent or facility request the materials. The materials may be provided electronically if the facility has the capacity. Materials must be provided every seven days for the duration of the time a student is detained. The school corporation is responsible for the costs but may charge rental fees.

Requires a suspended student to complete all assignments during the time of suspension. Requires a principal or designee to provide a student notice of the assignments and teacher contact information. Also requires a school to provide expelled students a list of alternative education programs or virtual schools.

SB 132 (Sen. Dennis Kruse, R-Auburn)
Civics exam

Requires every high school to administer the naturalization exam for citizenship to students as part of the U.S. government course requirement. The bill also requires increased study of the Holocaust in a U.S history course. The bill improved from its original version, which would have required a separate civics exam rather than being integrated into existing courses.

SB 189 (Sen. Vaneta Becker, R-Evansville)
Emergency communication disorder permits

Allows the IDOE to issue an emergency permit for communications disorders specialists. Requires licensure requirements for speech-language pathologists and audiologists to be reviewed by the professional licensing agency in consultation with IDOE and other professional associations. It also urges a study into streamlining the process for obtaining a license. This issue arose due to an oversight in previous law that phased out permits for communications disorders specialists. ISTA supports the idea of ensuring all students in need have access to specialists.

SB 216 (Sen. Phil Boots, R-Crawfordsville)
Veterans' education cost exemptions

Provides eligible children of veterans cost exemptions for education and provides resident in-state tuition rates for a spouse or dependent of an eligible veteran.

**SB 281 (Sen. Erin Houchin, R-Salem)
School administrator contracts**

Limits the amounts for administrator contract buyouts by school boards unless a contract provision already entered into provides otherwise. A school board may not pay a principal or assistant principal an amount more than one year's salary. A school board may not pay an assistant superintendent a buyout that exceeds the lesser of: (1) an amount equal to or lesser than the salary for 1 year or (2) \$250,000. Limits initial contract terms to at least 1 year but no more than 3 years. A contract may subsequently be extended for an additional 3 years for an assistant superintendent, principal or assistant principal.

**SB 373 (Sen. Dennis Kruse, R-Auburn)
Academic credit for religious instruction**

Allows a high school student to receive up to two academic credits for release time for religious instruction. The measure sets up several conditions that must be met to qualify for credits being awarded.

**SB 390 (Sen. Erin Houchin, R-Salem)
Civil penalties/anti-union public bargaining requirements**

During formal bargaining, the bill requires that an initial collective bargaining session be conducted publicly and a subsequent public hearing within 72 hours of the school employer's ratification vote on a tentative agreement. Additionally, the bill permits the state to assess fines up to \$5,000 against the school administration or teachers unions for certain alleged unfair labor practices.

Throughout all its iterations, ISTA opposed this bill as anti-union, unnecessary and disrespectful of the collective voice of teachers.

**SB 546 (Sen. Victoria Spartz, R-Noblesville)
Study committee**

Urges an interim study committee on the issue of integrating and merging responsibilities of the state board and the Governor's Workforce Cabinet, as well as composition of the boards.

**SB 562 (Sen. Jeff Raatz, R-Richmond)
Teacher preparation programs**

Requires each teacher preparation program in Indiana to report the following (1) the number of teacher candidates in each content area who complete a program annually with disaggregated data by GPA; (2) the number of candidates who fail the content area licensure exam annually and do not retake the exam; (3) program retention rates and (4) the number of licensed teachers in Indiana.

SB 567 (Sen. Jeff Raatz, R-Richmond)
Virtual schools

Requires onboarding processes and orientation before a student can enroll in a virtual school. Establishes thresholds for the number of students participating in a virtual program within a school corporation to where a school must be designated as a virtual school if more than 50 percent of instruction is online. Requires a virtual charter school to comply with mandatory licensed teacher trainings aligned with traditional public school teacher trainings. Requires a habitual truant to be withdrawn from a virtual school. Requires annual attendance reporting. Gives the state board specific authority over charter schools that are placed in the lowest category of school improvement for four consecutive years. Urges a study committee to assess expenditures of virtual schools.

ISTA supported the modest virtual school accountability provisions as a first step but opposed a provision that was included in this bill in the House Education Committee to require public schools to count as drop-out students who leave school in their senior year to be home schooled. The final version slightly improved the language to allow the state board to adjust the formula for a high school's graduation rate based on a school's student population numbers.

ISTA believes that this bill fell short of ensuring true accountability and transparency for not only student performance in virtual schools, but also fiscal accountability. Hoosier taxpayers pay millions of dollars annually for failing schools that have essentially no limit on student-to-teacher ratios, have thousands of students not receiving credits and demonstrate abysmal graduation rates.

SB 607 (Sen. Jeff Raatz, R-Richmond)
Workforce diploma reimbursement program

Establishes a workforce diploma reimbursement program administered by the Governor's Workforce Cabinet and Department of Workforce Development to approve eligible providers. Requires reporting and analysis of workforce programs.

RETIRED

SB 22 (Sen. Phil Boots, R-Crawfordsville)

Pension matters

Makes numerous technical changes and conforming updates to Indiana's Public Employees' Retirement Fund (PERF) and TRF:

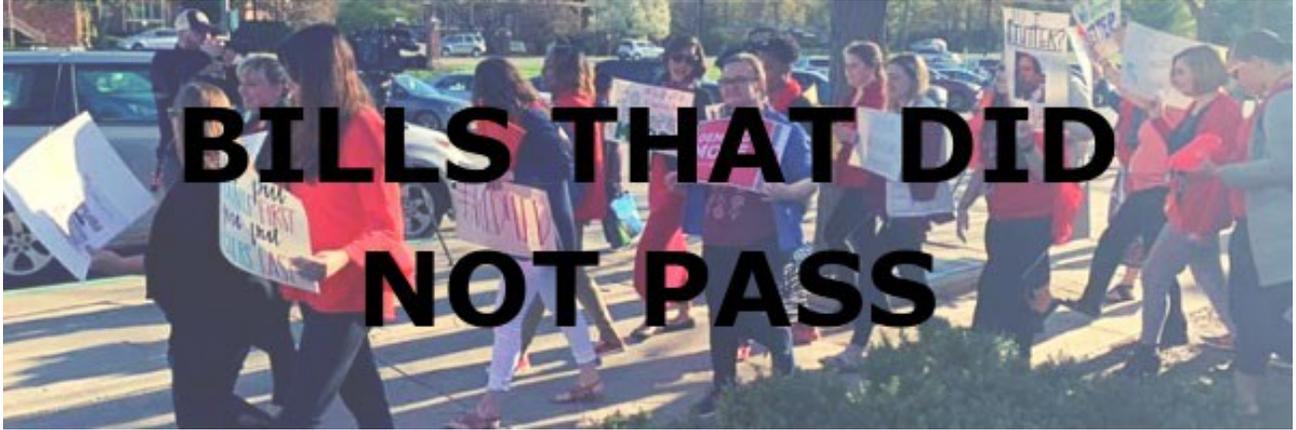
- Allows a retired member of PERF and TRF to make partial withdrawals from annuity savings accounts.
- Makes provisions for elected officials to receive benefits after age 70 while still employed.
- Makes corrections for calculating service credits for members who take a leave of absence.
- Allows money in the pension relief fund to be used for reasonable administrative expenses approved by Indiana Public Retirement System.
- Corrects definitions for the defined contribution plan now that it is a separate plan.
- Adds the optional defined contribution plan to the list of available plans (now that the Internal Revenue Service has approved).

ELECTIONS

HB 1311 (Rep. Tom Saunders, R-Lewisville)

Absentee ballots

Restricts the window for absentee ballots from 12 days before Election Day to eight days. The bill also allows certain applications for absentee ballots electronically. ISTA opposed the bill, because it further limits the time frame for which voters may vote absentee. Indiana already had one of the shortest absentee voting windows in the nation.



**HB 1253 (Rep. Jim Lucas, R-Seymour)
Handgun training for teachers**

HB 1253 would have created a specialized firearms safety, education and training curriculum for teachers, school staff and school employees. Would have authorized funds from the Indiana Safe Schools fund to pay for the training.

ISTA opposed this bill as an unnecessary expenditure from the school safety fund. Better approaches would be to address root causes of this level of violence — more school counselors, psychologists, smaller class sizes and better technology to ensure school buildings and classrooms are safe. ISTA also opposed the amended version that allowed school employees to consent to active shooter trainings that include shooting projectiles at them.

**HB 1255 (Rep. John Prescott, R-Union City)
529 college savings plans**

The bill could have opened up more opportunities for use of 529 plans for private K – 12 expenses for those individuals who contribute to 529 accounts and receive a tax credit.

**HB 1404 (Rep. Tony Cook, R-Cicero)
School accountability**

The bill would have allowed a high school to substitute a work-based learning course or CTE course that is approved by the state board. The course could count toward the Indiana diploma with a Core 40 or honors designation. It also would have required the state board to establish new standards for performance by July 2022.

ISTA's strongest opposition to the bill was a provision that would have allowed students' post-graduation outcomes to be factored into a school's accountability. ISTA opposed the bill due to many unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances that occur in students' lives after graduation and schools should not be held accountable for those factors.

**HB 1445 (Rep. Tim Brown, R-Crawfordsville)
Rule of 95**

The bill would have removed early retirement options for public employees by replacing the Rule of 85 with a new Rule of 95, thereby ending early retirement. The bill also would have made the default pension option for public employees in PERF and TRF as the defined contribution option instead of the defined benefit plan. ISTA opposes defined contribution retirement plans on the basis that such plans offer far less retirement security.

**HB 1476 (Rep. Todd Huston, R-Fishers)
Post-graduation outcomes**

The bill would have established a post-graduation pilot where schools would be “rewarded” based on the successes or failures of high school graduates after they leave the school system for six months following graduation. This bill, among similar iterations, would have held schools accountable for unforeseen circumstances a graduate may experience once they are no longer in school.

**HB 1640 (Rep. Bob Behning, R-Indianapolis)
School accreditation/waivers**

The bill would have sunset freeway school accreditation after June 30, 2019, prohibiting the state board from entering into, renewing or extending a contract. It would have expired the establishment and administration of freeway schools on June 30, 2024.

The bill would have set up new accreditation requirements for schools, allowing A, B and C schools to waive nearly any statute under Indiana Code 20 governing public schools, although certain statutes over bargaining, safety and licensing were nonwaivable. However, D and F schools could also petition the state board for the waiver of statutes.

An accredited nonpublic school that is D or F for four consecutive years would have its accreditation revoked by the state board.

The bill would have counted a school day as a full instruction day as long as the starting time is delayed no more than two hours or if students are released no more than two hours early due to inclement weather or safety issues.

ISTA supported the phase out of freeway schools, which originated as an alternative accreditation for higher-performing public schools but grew into an expansion of private schools (which currently can receive new voucher students with no track record of performance). The number of freeway schools has grown exponentially since the inception.

However, ISTA strongly opposed provisions allowing schools to unilaterally waive a multitude of laws and protections.

**HB 1675 (Rep. Ryan Lauer, R-Columbus)
Education Savings Accounts**

This bill, which has appeared for the past several sessions, would have established Education Savings Accounts, representing a huge expansion of vouchers in the form of private student accounts.

**SB 246/SB 560 (Sen. Blake Doriot, R-Syracuse/Sen. Erin Houchin, R-Salem)
Restrictions on referenda**

SB 246 started as a bill to significantly limit opportunities for when a local referendum/public question could be held – limited to general elections or municipal elections, where an entire district was contained within the municipality.

ISTA opposed these bills as they unnecessarily restrict opportunities for school districts and communities to help themselves. Referenda continue to be an important local tool for some school districts to supplement state funding as they attempt to cover rising education costs.

**SB 282 (Sen. Erin Houchin, R-Salem)
Value-added models**

The bill would have allowed IDOE to contract with a vendor to set up a value-added growth and projections analytics system to measure student performance tied to teachers. This was vendor-driven legislation that could have had negative consequences for teacher evaluations, imposing high-stakes consequences such as job and salary determinations.

**SB 507 (Sen. Jeff Raatz, R-Richmond)
Early warning system**

The bill would have allowed the state board to establish an early warning system and graduation pathways tracking system for students. This was another vendor-driven bill, similar to SB 282. Additionally, it would have set up a new framework for teacher evaluations including “certified evaluators,” but the bill was lacking in detail on what exactly this would look like and who exactly would be certified to evaluate. The bill also would have required collection and reporting of teacher evaluation data.