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School Board Advocate: February 10, 2017

Volume 28, Number 3



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Groundhog Day

Not sure if the Colorado Legislature has its own version of Punxsutawney Phil, the famous weather-predicting rodent of Pennsylvania, but if they do, it seems a safe bet to say there will be six more weeks of warmed-over, repackaged legislation.

The General Assembly is more than a month into the 120-day session. To date, more than 350 bills have been introduced. However, if you didn't know any better, you would swear that somebody under the Gold Dome forgot to change the calendar to 2017. Many of the bills so far are carryovers from years past or political statements that have no chance of becoming law.

The deja-vu factor was in full effect as the Senate Education Committee convened to hear [Senate Bill 61](#) – “Additional Funding for Charter Schools.” **Sen. Owen Hill**, R-Colorado Springs, and **Sen. Angela Williams**, D-Denver, are the bill sponsors. Just like Dr. Frankenstein and his monster, the sponsors have brought back to life the majority of a bill that failed during the 2016 session. The bill would force most Colorado school districts to share local voter-approved mill levy override (MLO) funds with district-authorized charter schools. We say “most” districts because the bill has exclusions for at least two districts, with the potential for several more to be excluded as the bill works its way through the General Assembly. The fiscal note attached to the bill pegs the amount that the remaining districts would have to fund at more than \$96 million.

In addition, if SB 61 were to be approved, the state would have to come up with an additional \$13.7 million to fund a MLO equalization for charter schools authorized by the Colorado Charter School Institute (CSI).

CASB was well represented at the hearing, both in person and via remote testimony. CASB members from Alamosa, Salida, Naturita, Colorado Springs, Cherry Creek and Littleton provided the committee with real-world examples of how locally elected school boards are already working with charter schools to ensure every student receives a great education. Members stressed the importance of the commitment that boards make to their communities to spend MLO funds in ways that voters approved. The takeaway for many was that Colorado has a systemic problem when it comes to funding public schools, and creating divisions between neighborhood and charter schools is not the answer.

After three hours of testimony, SB 61 was laid over by the committee to be voted on at a later date, so stay tuned.



The Gold Dome Heating Up

The Colorado General Assembly is considering more than 30 bills directly related to education. The Joint Budget Committee (JBC) continues its work on a budget to present to the entire legislature. If past experience is any indicator, you can expect to see a budget draft in late February or early March.

In addition to Senate Bill 61, here are a couple of bills that you need to know about:

[Senate Bill 101](#) – 9th and 10-grade Assessments in Public Schools – Allowing Colorado to Leave the PARCC Consortium and Provide Flexibility to School Districts on Assessments

[House Bill 1003](#) – Strategic Plan to Address Teacher Shortages – Require the Colorado Department of Education and Department of Higher Education to Develop a Plan to Address Teacher Shortages

- [The minimal fiscal note](#)

Need help staying on top of legislation? Want to learn more about each bill? Then you need the CASB Bill Tracker. The tracker highlights the bills that the CASB advocacy team is keeping a close eye on.

- [Bill Tracker – Portrait view](#)
- [Bill Tracker – Landscape view](#)



Budget committee holds the line on 2016-17 school funding

January can be a nervous month for school districts because it's the time of year when the legislature's Joint Budget Committee tinkers with the annual school funding law to account for enrollment counts and property tax revenues

that were calculated in the fall.

There's good news for districts (or at least not bad news) in 2016-17 adjustments approved by the budget committee on Jan. 24. The panel's plan basically keeps this school year's budget – called Total Program Funding – stable at just under \$6.4 billion.

The mid-year adjustment always has lots of moving pieces. Here's what happened this time around:



- Because statewide enrollment was about 2,600 students fewer than originally projected (and because at-risk enrollment also was lower), \$25.5 million needed to be cut from Total Program.
- But district property tax revenues came in \$23.1 million less than expected.

The committee decided to keep the state's share of school funding constant. The effect of that will be to slightly reduce the negative factor from \$830.7 million to \$828.3 million, a net gain of \$2.4 million.

But average per-pupil funding is dropping \$4 to \$7,420.

That's all basically high-level school finance math and doesn't necessarily have meaning for an individual district.

The important thing to remember is that funding changes will vary by district. If your enrollment was lower than predicted – and especially if the same happened with at-risk enrollment – your district will be receiving less funding that was listed in the original 2016-17 funding bill. But if your enrollment grew, you'll be receiving more.

[The Department of Education's spreadsheet showing district-by-district impacts](#)



Be Our Guest

[The CASB Winter Legislative Conference](#) on February 23-24 is just around the corner. Fear not, there is still time to register. There is an old saying that a "closed mouth doesn't get fed," and now is the time for all CASB members to speak up for Colorado education. The Winter Conference is a great opportunity to educate yourself and also meet with your legislators and help educate them. [Register today!](#)

– Todd Engdahl, Capitol Editorial Services

CASB Advocacy Tools

- [CASB Bill Tracker](#)
- **CASB Legislative Conference Call**
Tuesday, March 14 at 8 a.m.
Dial 877-240-8466
PIN: 8115970342#
Presentation available at <http://join.me/mattcookcasb>
- **CASB Members at Education Committee** – [Sign up here](#)
- [CASB Days at the Capitol](#)



Our first Day at the Capitol is Wed., March 1. Join us at CASB for a briefing with our advocacy team, followed by a visit to the Colorado Legislature to see the House and Senate in action. To find out what's scheduled, visit the [Colorado General Assembly website](#).

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