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Students Deserve the BEST



When Colorado voters decided to decriminalize marijuana for recreational use, one of the promises made was that “pot taxes” would benefit schools. Building Excellent Schools Today (BEST) was born out of that promise. BEST has helped provide safe and functional learning spaces for Colorado students.

However, like all things in life, there is room for improvement. [HB18-1070](#) hopes to bring the changes needed to improve BEST. This bill would help strengthen the BEST program by adding additional resources and ensuring that marijuana tax dollars continue to be used for education. Representatives Dave Young (D) and Cole Wist (R) are the House sponsors of the bill. With their help, the bill has bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. This week, the House Education Committee heard testimony from school board members and superintendents about the need for safe and functional schools across the state. [Click here](#) for detailed information explaining how current BEST taxes are distributed.

CASB members stepped up in support of the bill. The call – actually it was a text – went out to ask House Education Committee members to support HB18-1070. Locally elected school board members responded with more than 230 connections with legislators via email, Twitter and Facebook. This type of advocacy by CASB members is invaluable. You, as a locally elected school board member, have the ability to explain the successes and challenges your community faces better than anybody else. With your help, the Education Committee approved the bill on a 12-1 vote. HB18-1070 now heads to House Finance where the support of CASB members will again be needed.

If you would like to be a part of the CASB Legislative Call to Action team, please text CASB to 52886.

Conflicting Priorities



Every spring, the Colorado General Assembly passes a state budget for the next fiscal year. A final state budget takes many unexpected turns. Since actual student enrollment and local tax revenues are not known until the end of the calendar year, the Joint Budget Committee (JBC) meets every spring to review data and propose school finance adjustments midway through the school year. [Click here](#) to find information on this year’s “School Finance Mid-Year Adjustments to Funding” or HB18-1171.

After the JBC went to work in November 2017, members learned that total student enrollment and at-risk enrollment were lower than had been projected last spring. That meant the state could reduce planned funding by \$13 million and still hold statewide average per-pupil funding at \$7,662 (actual enrollment was a bit higher than it was in 2016-17).

The JBC learned that local property tax revenue would be higher than anticipated, meaning the state would need to contribute \$97 million less to 2017-18 school funding than had been projected.

The budget panel decided to save the combined \$110 million, with the majority of it in the State Public School Fund account. All of the adjustments were contained in HB18-1171.

When the bill hit the House, members amended it to allow districts to keep that \$13 million this school year, raising the statewide average student funding to \$7,670. Unfortunately, after the bill passed the House, the Senate Appropriations Committee promptly stripped the \$13 million from the bill, returning the measure to the version approved by the JBC.

Senate leadership delayed floor debate on the bill several times before bringing it to a preliminary vote when two Democratic senators were absent. After the smoke had cleared, the Senate, on a voice vote, approved the original version of the bill, which fails to give districts the \$13 million this year. Hopefully, the House will ask for a conference committee to try and resolve the differences between the Senate and House versions of the bill. However, the JBC could be the committee of record and they deadlocked on the issue in its first hearing.

In Like a Lion

March will roar into 2018 like a lion. How do we know? Because March 1st - 2nd will feature the CASB Winter Legislative Conference. This year’s conference will take a look at the politics of public school choice in Colorado and highlight many of the terrific programs that local school boards are offering their students. Of course, there will be plenty of legislative news and updates for you political wonks. Information on PERA and school finance will be front and center. You will have an opportunity to mingle with your Senators and Representatives at the CASB Education Leaders and Legislators reception on the evening of Thursday, March 1.

There is still time to register. [Click here](#) for more information.



Delegation to Resolution



The CASB Delegate Assembly is still many months away. This provides ample time for your board to discuss any resolutions to present to the delegates. The Delegate Assembly helps guide the CASB legislative platform and allows every CASB member school board to have their voice heard on issues important to them. Mark your

calendars for October 19-20 for the Fall Delegate Assembly Conference. Details coming soon!

CASB Advocacy Tools



[CASB Bill Tracker](#) – Track the latest education news from the Capitol.

The School Board Advocate – Published on the 2nd and 4th Friday of the month during the legislative session. In months when the Colorado General Assembly is not in session, we publish on the 4th Friday of the month. The School Board Advocate is not published in July and December.

[CASB Legislative Conference Calls](#) - Use the web link to join the meeting. The next meeting will be Friday, March 23, 2018, at 8:00 am. Meetings are held the 4th Friday of each month during the legislative session.

[CASB Days at the Capitol](#) – Join CASB, fellow board members and students at the Capitol! Our Days at the Capitol events run March through April and give school board members—from rural districts tucked away in the mountains and plains, to large districts neighboring the state capitol—a chance to experience the legislative process firsthand and help strengthen the voice of school boards.

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