

# Iowa Association of Christian Schools 2010 Session Preview



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## 2010 Legislative Session Will Bring Opportunities And Challenges

A near \$1 billion shortfall, a down economy, and dwindling federal dollars has Iowa legislators' work cut out for them. IACS will have its own unique challenges.

### 2010 Legislative Session Starts Today!

To save funds (and get home to campaign since it IS an election year!), the Iowa Legislature has cut the session length from the normal 100 days to 80. This should put the session end-date at around March 31.

As you know, education gets much attention each session and our schools frequently live in the realm of unintended consequences. We'll be reading every piece of legislation affecting public and private schools in Iowa this year to make sure your schools are kept up to speed on proposed legislation. We'll invite you to participate!



### Educational Opportunities Act

With all the scrutiny on tax credits after the Iowa Film Office flap, Governor Culver's "Tax Credit Review Panel" made the unfortunate recommendation to reduce and adjust the Educational Opportunities Act (EOA) tax credits. This would dramatically effect our School Tuition Organizations (STOs).

The panel recommends that the legislature reduce the EOA from the current \$7.5 million in tax credits to \$5 million and reduce the tax credit percentage from the current 65% to 40%. This would result in fewer dollars for low- and

middle-income families to send their kids to our schools and would make the fundraising more difficult with the reduced percentage.

Iowa Advocates For Choice In Education (Iowa ACE's C4 organization) will be leading the charge to sustain the EOA and protect this opportunity for Iowa families. IACS will be working in concert with Iowa ACE and the Iowa Catholic Conference. We'll keep you updated on developments!

These are just recommendations from the Governor's panel and are not binding on the legislature. Senator Gronstal has already indicated he may not agree with all the recommendations and we are hopeful legislators from both parties will see the value of the program, the money it saves the state, and will step up to support it.

### Tuition & Textbook Tax Credit

Another recommendation made by Governor Culver's Tax Credit Review Panel relates to the longstanding Tuition & Textbook Tax Credit. This is used by public AND private school families when qualified educational expenses have been made. The panel recommends making this tax credit available only to families with an annual gross income of \$45,000 or less. IACS will be working with our partners to address this recommendation as well.

### Special/College Prep Accreditation

The Iowa Department of Education has pre-filed a bill that would cap the Special Accreditation that affects eight secondary schools in Iowa at the current number of

schools and close it to any new schools. IACS will be working to oppose this cap.

The College Preparatory Accreditation has worked for over 40 years, with the five Christian Schools and three independent schools achieving some of the most impressive academic outcomes in the state.

This accreditation is more in line with how other states treat private schools and IACS believes this should be a choice for Iowa's private schools in the future. Please contact Eric Goranson with questions about this issue.

## Other Issues

IACS will be working with the Iowa Catholic Conference to adjust the definition of textbook for nonpublic schools to allow for the purchase of classroom instructional technology. Currently textbook software can be acquired with nonpublic textbook dollars but not smart-boards, iPods, computer hardware, or other classroom technologies. This adjustment will not cost the state additional dollars but would instead create some additional flexibility for our state accredited schools.

We will also be looking to at least maintain, if not restore, our textbook and transportation dollars. Our textbook appropriation is at a lower level today than it was in 1992. Our transportation appropriation is 20% underfunded. We understand that the budget is difficult but we believe further cuts to these funds would not be wise, appropriate, or just.

## Have IACS Speak To Your Group/Event!

Thank you to William Penn University's Bible Study and Chapel group for inviting IACS lobbyist Eric Goranson to speak at one of their Chapel services on November 12. A big THANK YOU to the Heartland Symposium for having Eric speak to

their administrators and board members at Dordt College Nov 19.

**We are looking for opportunities to connect with school leaders, parent-groups & events!** Please contact Eric Goranson if you are willing to let us speak to your group about IACS, School Choice, and/or to answer any specific questions you may have. We'll travel anywhere in the state to meet your administrators, teachers, families, and/or community leaders!

We also need help finding connections with accredited and non-accredited Christian Schools that are not IACS members. We would love to speak to their administrators, boards, or parent groups about IACS and the work it does for their school. Thank you!

## IACS IS ONLINE!

**You can find IACS on Twitter!** Follow us on Twitter to get updates from our lobbyist throughout the session!

[www.twitter.com/IA\\_IACS](http://www.twitter.com/IA_IACS)

We are also on Facebook! Become a "fan" of IACS on Facebook by searching for "Iowa Association of Christian Schools."

## Join The Team!

If your school has already sent in its dues for this school year, thank you!

If not, please take the time to consider joining our team. We need your help to protect the rights of Christian Schools in Iowa. THANK YOU! Contact any board member or Eric with questions.

## IACS Board Of Directors

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## Contact Your Legislator:

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