

Iowa Association of Christian Schools

March 2010 Newsletter



www.iowachristianschools.org

March 5, 2010

2010 Legislative Session Passes Second Funnel Date

IACS has had a busy session due to budget drama, the shortened 80 day schedule, and some controversial bills coming before legislators this year. Please read below and continue to engage in the process! We can't be effective without you!

2010 Legislative Session In Full Swing

The Iowa Legislature has cut the session length from the normal 100 days to 80 and is still on track to finish around March 31 (we hope) or shortly thereafter.

Your school's financial support of IACS has resulted in some concrete results at the capitol already this year. We successfully lobbied against this year's comprehensive sexuality education bill, unfunded mandates such as the vision screenings and dating violence bills, and the passage of our textbook technology bill out of the Senate and House Ed Committee. We've had some great victories so far this year! Please make sure your school is one of the many Christ-centered schools in Iowa supporting your voice at the capitol! Thank you!

Educational Opportunities Act

Wondering what's happening with the tax credit program? So are we! We are expecting a tax credit bill to be released very soon and we are hearing from legislators on both sides of the aisle that we may have some work to do to sustain current levels.

Iowa Advocates For Choice In Education (Iowa ACE's 501 C4 organization) is leading the charge to sustain the EOA and protect this opportunity for Iowa families. IACS is working in concert with Iowa ACE and the Iowa Catholic Conference and this issue will become IACS' top priority once we know what's in the upcoming bill.

We are opposing any changes to the EOA and have a legislative alert on our new website you can use, if you

haven't already, to communicate that important message to your legislators!

Third Party Accreditation

IACS is hoping to introduce a third party accreditation bill next session. This would allow Iowa's nonpublic schools to obtain a reputable regional or national accreditation in lieu of Iowa's State accreditation. We have been working on language for such a bill for a while and were pleasantly surprised to see a bill (HF 2317) this session that does much of what we are looking to accomplish.

A very special thank you to **Representative Jason Schultz** (R - Schleswig, IA, pictured) for submitting the bill this year and **Brian L'Heureux** at **Zion Lutheran School** in Denison, IA for bringing this issue to Rep. Schultz's attention.



Rep. Schultz has been 100% supportive of Iowa's nonpublic schools and we appreciate his willingness to work with us on a very similar bill next session.

Special/College Prep Accreditation

The Iowa Department of Education's pre-filed bill that would cap the Special Accreditation passed the Senate Education committee but was not debated on the Senate floor before the second funnel which is this week. The bill

is, technically, dead for the year but we will be watching amendments to make sure it doesn't appear on an appropriations, standings, or other bill before the end of the session. This issue isn't over quite yet!

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

Thank you for contacting your legislators to encourage them to oppose this arbitrary cap on a very successful program. The legislative alert is still up on our website. Please feel free to contact your legislator about the issue if you haven't already.

Other Issues

IACS has been working 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. A bill by Senator Hancock has passed the Senate and House Education Committee and we'll be working to get it debated on the House floor before the end of the session.

We are also looking to 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 or just. The initial budget targets suggest a 3.9% cut to the textbook funds.

IACS On Tour

IACS would like to thank IACS Board Member Barbara Buescher for inviting IACS lobbyist Eric Goranson to their

meeting of Lutheran Principals in Johnston March 2. We had a good discussion about IACS and its work at the capitol and Eric always appreciates the opportunity to speak to such a great group.

We are looking for further 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.

IACS WEBSITE!

IACS is now has a website! Find it at www.iowachristianschools.org. Learn more about IACS, see the IACS calendar, and sign up to receive updates. A Legislative Alerts page is up so you can contact legislators on specific issues.

You can find IACS on **Twitter** at www.twitter.com/IA_IACS

We're also on **Facebook!** Search 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, we can't effectively represent the interests of your school at the capitol without the participation of all our schools. **We need your help to protect the rights of Christian Schools in Iowa.** Contact any board member or Eric Goranson with questions.

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