

August 21, 2007

EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE RESPONDS TO 2008 STATE BUDGET



The Illinois Education Roundtable is an organization committed to unifying the voice of educational organizations and consists of representatives from 17 school leadership associations and organizations representing more than 6000 school board members, over 7000 school leaders and in excess of 230,000 teachers and other school personnel.

In anticipation of Governor Blagojevich's action on HB 3866, which contains State appropriations for Fiscal Year 2008, The Illinois Education Roundtable issues the following analysis:

2008 BUDGET MAKES MINIMAL PROGRESS ON ROUNDTABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

Earlier this year, The Illinois Education Roundtable identified four (4) school funding priorities and called upon the Illinois General Assembly and the Governor to unify around a tax reform plan to adequately fund public education in Illinois.

While, The Illinois Education Roundtable recognizes that the 2008 Budget contains significant and unprecedented funding for Illinois schools and makes some progress toward these recommendations, significant identified needs remain unaddressed. In fact, major issues such as school construction and long-term pension funding are still outstanding. Therefore, it remains clear that new revenue sources will be required to fully address the fundamental needs of public education.

Below is a comparison of Illinois Education recommendations and 2008 Budget provisions.

1. Special Education Personnel Reimbursement

The Illinois Education Roundtable recommends that Special Education Personnel Reimbursement be established and sustained at 33% of the average Illinois teacher salary. This would raise the reimbursement level to \$19,000 per special education teacher.

2008 Budget will increase reimbursement from the 1985 level of \$8,000 to \$9,000, leaving special education personnel reimbursement \$10,000 short of the Roundtable recommendation.

2. Foundation Level

The Illinois Education Roundtable recommends that the General Assembly appropriate adequate resources to fully support an EFAB recommended Foundation Level by 2010.

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The 2007 Foundation Level was \$5,334 and the projected EFAB level (inflation adjusted¹) would be \$6,974.

2008 Budget will increase the Foundation Level by \$400 with no commitment to supporting the EFAB formula now or in the future. The Foundation Level remains \$1,240 short of the EFAB and the Illinois Education Roundtable recommendation.

3. Mandated Categorical Funding

The Illinois Education Roundtable recommends that sufficient funds be appropriated to fully fund current categorical levels for 2008.

2008 Budget fully funds current categorical levels for 2008. This component of the budget is consistent with the recommendations of the Illinois Education Roundtable and is commended.

4. School Construction

With 23 districts still waiting for the State of Illinois to fund entitlements from 2002 and hundreds of districts in the state having applied for assistance with construction and maintenance costs, The Illinois Education Roundtable recommends that at least \$1.5 billion in construction funding and \$150 million in maintenance funds be authorized by the General Assembly for 2008 with a continuous program of funding thereafter.

2008 Budget provides no construction funding for any Illinois schools and previous legislation to support 2002 entitlements has been nullified by the Governor and the Capital Development Board due to timing and “technicalities.”

Additional specific Illinois Education Roundtable recommendations that have not been addressed by the legislature and/or the Governor:

- *The Roundtable urges the Governor to convene EFAB on an annual basis to update the recommended Foundation Level.*
- *In addition, an annually updated EFAB Foundation Level should be sustained by a long-term funding solution.*

Roundtable Chair, Dr. Michael Jacoby states; “In a year when legislators, the Governor, business and educational professionals voiced the need for urgent and momentous progress in educational funding, the 2008 budget is disappointing in that systemic reform was not achieved. The children of Illinois are still in need of adequate State resources to support their educational opportunities.”

The Illinois Education Roundtable calls upon the Governor and the legislature to achieve real funding reform and resolve the unaddressed needs of Illinois schools.

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¹ EFAB inflation adjusted figure is based on the FY 2006 recommended level of \$6,405 adjusted on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Economic Cost Index or ECI. ECI was recommended as an appropriate annual adjustment by EFAB.