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Charting the Capitol 2017-18 School Funding Takes Shape

As we continue to wait and see whether House leadership will give Senate Bill 61 the fair hearing it deserves, one of the big education issues to take center stage at the Capitol over the past few weeks has been the question of how much - if at all - school funding will increase next year.

The overall budget is still being debated in the House and has yet to be finalized, but if current estimates hold, average per-pupil funding would increase approximately \$185 per student next school year. Read on for further details related to this and other debates currently taking place at the State House, and stay tuned for additional updates as these budget figures and other pieces of education-related legislation are finalized over the remaining five weeks of the 2017 legislative session.

Finally, don't hesitate to contact us at the information provided at the end of this newsletter should you have any legislative questions or concerns.

[2017-18 School Finance Picture Begins to Take Shape](#)

[Your Investment In Action: The League Successfully Beats Back Harmful Anti-Charter Legislation](#)

[Senate Bill 61 Latest: Keep Those Legislative Calls and Emails Coming!](#)

["Legislative Lunch" Calls Continue This Friday](#)

[Other News of Note: Charter Nominees Needed for the New Colorado Teacher Cabinet, CDE Solicits Committee Members for New CMAS Assessment Item Reviews, Link to Complete List of Current Education Legislation](#)

2017-18 School Finance Picture Begins to Take Shape

For many months now legislators have been debating how much, if any, additional revenue would be able to go to schools in the 2017-18 school year. At different points estimates have ranged widely between those saying state per-pupil revenue would actually take a cut and those saying the state would be able to keep the so-called "negative factor" level - which would represent a decent-sized boost to education funding heading into next year.

As is often the case in these sorts of situations, the final number appears to be landing somewhere in the middle. There won't be any cuts, but the negative factor won't be held entirely level either. Under the budget proposal put forth a little over a week ago by the Joint Budget Committee and then approved by the Senate last week, the negative factor would grow by \$48 million to a total of approximately \$881 million. While under better circumstances we wouldn't be seeing the negative factor grow at all, the good news is that this still translates into a per-pupil increase heading into next year. Specifically, if current estimates hold as the budget now makes its way through the House, schools across the state will see an average increase of \$185 per student heading into the next school year. As these numbers are finalized over the coming weeks and the state releases its annual report on what this would mean on a district-by-district basis, we'll be sure to keep you posted on developments.

Your Investment in Action: The League Successfully Beats Back Harmful Anti-Charter Legislation

With an 11-0 vote, legislators on the House Education Committee voted decisively last week to kill a bill that would have had significant negative impacts on charter schools. Introduced by Representative Adrienne Benavidez (D-Commerce City), [House Bill 17-1182](#) sought to single out charter schools by saying they should have to return money for students that leave after count day. The bill was introduced despite the fact that there is no evidence to suggest that charter schools in Colorado have any higher rates of students leaving after count day than any other schools in the state ([see here](#)). As a result of the League's successful advocacy and testimony efforts, we were able to convince legislators that this was a bad proposal that had no place becoming law. Thankfully, the bipartisan House Education Committee voted unanimously to dismiss it. Special thanks to Lili Adeli (Headmaster, Boulder Prep Charter High School), Randy Zimmerman (Principal, CIVA Charter High School), and Moira Coogan (Principal, REACH Charter School) for taking time out of their spring break schedules to offer compelling testimony in opposition to this harmful bill.

SB61 Update: Keep Those Calls and Emails Coming!

We're still awaiting a final decision from House leadership on whether they will give Senate Bill 61 the fair hearing it deserves by assigning it to the House Education Committee. **In the meantime, we need you to keep up the pressure on your legislators.** They are hearing loud and clear from opponents of Senate Bill 61, [many of whom are spreading lies and misinformation about charter schools](#). If we hope to counteract this opposition, we need to keep a steady stream of calls and emails going in to elected officials. Please call 720-523-0118 and enter your zip code to be patched through to your House Representative's office, or [click here](#) to remind your representatives that no child's education should be valued any less simply because he or she attends a public school with the word "charter" in its name.



Looking for inspiration to help make that call? [Click here for the latest piece of positive press on Senate Bill 61, this time from the Grand Junction Daily Sentinel editorial board](#). Also now available is the [this web link](#) providing lots of background on SB61 and correcting the record on many of the myths being spread about the bill.

Join Us for Friday "Legislative Lunch" Calls

The League continues to host weekly conference calls with up-to-the-minute details on the preceding week's legislative developments. These calls take place over the lunch hour (from 12:00-12:30) on Fridays and can be accessed by dialing 1-800-977-8002 and inserting access code 577658#. Legislative Lunch calls will continue every Friday (unless otherwise noted) at noon through May 12.

Other News of Note

Charter Nominees Needed for the New Colorado Teacher Cabinet

Colorado Education Commissioner Katy Anthes recently announced the creation of a new Teacher Cabinet to serve as a sounding board for the implementation of state education policy and to brainstorm solutions for some of the challenges facing today's educators. The Commissioner's Teacher Cabinet will be made up of 15 teachers from around the state representing small, medium, large, rural, suburban and urban school systems. Applications are currently being accepted for the 2017-18 cabinet.

To be considered for the Commissioner's Teacher Cabinet, educators must have at least three years of experience in the classroom and must submit an application, resume and two letters of recommendation to CDE by May 5, 2017. Selected educators will serve two years on the cabinet beginning in August 2017. For more information, [click here](#) or [download this flyer](#) on the initiative.

CDE Solicits Committee Members for New CMAS Assessment Item Reviews

Colorado's current CMAS and CoAlt: science and social studies assessment contract is set to expire this summer, followed by our CMAS: English language arts and math contract next year. As a result, CDE recently issued a request for proposals from interested vendors seeking to take over these contracts.

Once a new vendor is selected, CDE will need a large and diverse group of educators for item and passage reviews to check for bias, alignment to standards, etc. They are beginning to collect the names of interested individuals at this time. If you are interested in this work or know of anyone who might be, please contact Margo Allen at allen_m@cde.state.co.us.

Complete List of Education Legislation

Chalkbeat Colorado continues to produce one of the most comprehensive and up-to-date lists of all education-related legislation. [Click here for the latest](#) and don't hesitate to contact us should you have any questions about specific legislation contained here.

Sincerely,
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