



# PEI

**PROFESSIONAL EDUCATORS OF IOWA**

February 15, 2011

**The debate** continued last week on the state budget with the passing of 0% allowable growth in the house chambers with a straight party line vote. House Republicans went along with the recommendations of the governor to pass a two year 0% allowable growth to bring the state's budget back within means. Following the passage of 0% allowable growth, a second bill passed the house last Tuesday that brings property tax relief to the school districts. This bill will back-fill funds to the property tax levy portion of the school budget to avoid higher property taxes. Both bills are on their way to the senate. In last week's update I informed you that the senate has passed 2% allowable growth in the education committee. This bill has yet to reach the senate floor. The two bills will most likely meet in conference committee later in session where a deal will have to be made between the house and senate. My prediction is a 1% allowable growth will be set as the compromise.

The 2% allowable growth bill is not the only bill stalled in the senate. Thus far the senate has only debated one bill a week and passed only two bills. None of the bills passed in the house have been debated in the senate.

**The preschool funding** controversy persists with the senate wanting to continue the preschool program as it currently is. The house wants to continue preschool as it is, but with far less funding. Their plan is to pay for low income families and have the rest of Iowans pay for the full cost of preschool. The governor's plan was announced yesterday and it is a compromise which cuts the expense in half, but leaves a majority of the program intact. His plan is a graduated scholarship program that will award a grant for the cost of preschool in relationship to the amount earned. The voucher starts at \$3,000, which is the cost, and will gradually be reduced based on family income. This plan is more demanding on the state and personal budgets, but meets in the middle for the house and senate. My prediction is the final plan for preschool will be very similar to what the governor has proposed. To our members who teach preschool: do not worry as it appears that your job will be safe. The argument surrounds the funding of the program not the program itself.

Last week **HF 116** was debated in subcommittee, where the bill did not pass. This bill focused on setting the school attendance age to 18 and taking away the driver's license for non-compliance. It would not have affected work permits.

Another bill, **HF 11** died in subcommittee yesterday which mandated a semester financial literacy course for all high school students. The concerns were cost of this course and that the bill be an unfunded mandate when the state is seeking a 0% allowable growth. Financial literacy is currently addressed in the core-curriculum. All three members agreed and decided to not move the bill.

A large number of bills have been moved to the subcommittee in the house this week. I will be sure to update you on all of them that effect education. The wait will likely still continue on the senate until Iowans begin to put pressure on their senators as well as Majority Leader Senator Gronstal. As one person put it, "The Senate is working hard at hardly working." We don't have that pleasure in education. Be sure to take action today.

I encourage everyone to contact the senators and tell them to get to work. Iowa cannot afford a lame duck senate. Look up your senator at [www.legis.iowa.gov](http://www.legis.iowa.gov) and tell them it is time to get busy.

**Greg Baker**  
PEI Lobbyist and Representative

## SCHOLARSHIP REMINDER

You have until April 1, 2011 to apply.

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