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School Board Advocate (formerly BillBoard) is CASB's semimonthly newsletter on our advocacy efforts and the latest developments at the state capitol that impact K–12 education. During the legislative session, we share this newsletter with school board members, superintendents, legislators, the governor's office, various statewide organizations, BOCES executive directors and the Colorado Council of School Board Attorneys.

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It's that time of year

With only 17 days left in the legislative session (counting weekends), tensions are high, committee hearings are running long and lobbyists and legislators are working overtime to wrap up the major (and minor) issues of the day.

Finance

The School Finance Act, SB 267, was finally introduced last Monday night and it was hardly worth the wait. The bill is short—but definitely not sweet—as it includes only \$25 million to pay back the negative factor and no additional money for at-risk students. In

the words of Dr. Jane Urschel, deputy executive director of CASB, "Our lawmakers continue to balance the budget at the expense of the children in our state." The Senate education committee approved the bill last week, April 16. [Click here](#) to find out how SB 267 will impact your district.

We still don't have a clear picture as to whether, or how, lawmakers will allocate more money for schools in the face of the \$70 million TABOR surplus that will be refunded to tax payers [next year](#). Governor Hickenlooper, who has been virtually silent on this issue since his early budget request seeking \$200 million for the negative factor, issued a [letter to legislators](#) last week. The letter lays out a five-point plan, which met quick resistance from Democrats and Republicans. Read the [Denver Post article](#) and the [Denver Post editorial](#) on the governor's plan.



Assessment

The two key assessment bills, SB 257 and HB 1323, are making their way through the legislature. After a long and confusing committee hearing last Thursday, SB 257 was approved by a vote of 8-1 (Senator Johnston was the sole "no" vote) but only after Senator Hill tacked on an \$18 million fiscal note intended to provide funding to districts interested in implementing assessment and accountability pilots (as permitted by the bill). While more money to support districts sounds good, the \$18 million was not requested by any of the districts interested in a pilot, and such a large fiscal note would almost certainly kill the bill. The Senate appropriations committee removed the additional funding after members were assured that districts did not want the money to support their pilot projects.

HB 1323 passed out of the House education committee last Monday afternoon. The bill was amended to require, among other things, 9th and 10th grade assessments in reading, writing and math and optional social studies testing. [Click here](#) for the Chalkbeat comparison of the two assessment bills, as they were amended in committee.

Both assessment bills should pass out of their respective houses this week and we believe both bills could survive the legislative process in one form or another. Ultimately, we expect that a conference committee convened in the final days of the session will determine the scope of the changes to our current assessment system.

Data Privacy

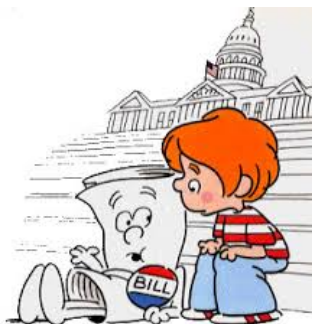
The data privacy bill (SB 173), packed the House education committee Wednesday morning. The bill limits certain online vendors' ability to engage in targeted advertising and sell or disclose student information. It requires school districts to adopt technology safety plans detailing, among other things, the type of student data that is stored in the "cloud" and to provide training for students and staff. Rural school districts are exempt from these requirements. Due to a late start and a full docket, the bill was laid over until Friday afternoon when the committee heard more testimony. A vote on the bill is scheduled for today.

Negative Factor Resolutions

On April 3, Del Norte Board President Wendy Mellott sent a final call to action to all school board presidents, urging their boards to pass a resolution in support of erasing the negative factor (or restoring Amendment 23 funding). At the time of publication, [52 boards have passed a resolution](#). CASB will deliver this message to legislators. If you haven't already done so, email your resolutions to your legislator as well.

State board update

After falling behind as a result of lengthy testimony on the Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, the State Board of Education postponed its discussion on proposed competency cut scores (in science and social studies) and on the state's graduation guidelines. The board is expected to take up the discussion of all of the above at its meeting next month, May 13 and 14.



Bills in action

SB 15-213 WAIVE GOVERNMENTAL IMMUNITY FOR ACTS OF SCHOOL VIOLENCE – Sens. Cadman (R) and Scheffel (R) and Reps. Hullinghorst (D) and Duran (D). The bill amends the Colorado Governmental Immunity Act (CGIA) to recognize that a duty of reasonable care exists with respect to public school districts, charter schools, and their employees to exercise reasonable care to protect students, faculty, staff, and others from harm that is reasonably foreseeable while such students, faculty, staff, and others are within the school facilities or are participating in school-sponsored activities. **Approved by Senate Judiciary Committee 4/13/15.** You may [click here](#) to reference a [joint letter](#) expressing concerns for this bill.

SB 15-214 INTERIM COMMITTEE SAFE SCHOOLS YOUTH MENTAL HEALTH – Sens. Scheffel (R) and Cadman (R) and Reps. Duran (D) and Hullinghorst (D). The bill creates the school safety and youth mental health committee (committee) to: study issues relating to school safety and the prevention of threats to the safety of students, teachers, administrators, employees, and volunteers; study and evaluate programs and methods for identifying and monitoring students in crisis; develop standardized criteria for school personnel to use in assessing the potential threat posed by one or more students; and make recommendations to the education committees of the General Assembly. The committee shall meet at least 4 times each legislative interim and may meet as necessary throughout the year. Each appointing party shall make his or her appointment or appointments to the committee on or before June 1, 2015. **Approved by Senate Judiciary Committee 4/13/15.**

Days at the Capitol

CASB's final Day at the Capitol for the 2015 legislative session was last Wednesday, April 15. More than 20 individuals from Region 5 and elsewhere showed up for a stimulating discussion of education-related bills and school finance.

During the 2015 session, more than 155 school board members gathered at CASB headquarters and went to the capitol to testify, meet with legislators or simply observe the proceedings on the floor.



"When we started the Days at the Capitol program several years ago, legislators weren't used to school board members making their voices heard in such a consistent and organized way," said Dr. Jane Urschel. "Today, they know they can't ignore you because you will be there! And believe me, your voices make so much more of a difference."



Volunteers needed: Liberty Day

Every year, an organization called the Liberty Day Foundation gives every fifth-grader in Colorado a pocket-sized version of the Constitution. A grant from the Daniels Fund supports the foundation's efforts, but they also need informed and articulate volunteers, like school board members, to make their program a success.

Typically, teachers host speakers in the spring around May 1 (Law Day). In the fall, teachers welcome guest speakers around Constitution Day, which is September 17.

If you'd like to speak to a fifth grade class in your district about the Constitution, in order to complement at teacher's lessons, please contact Eric Boyd at Eric@LibertyDay.org.

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