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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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How is the capitol like school?

There is too much talk about assessment! As Jane Urschel, CASB's deputy executive director, explains, "It feels like our legislators have decided to 'opt out' of helping us get more funding to buy down the negative factor."

Don't get us wrong – scaling back assessments is one of CASB's top priorities but we are deeply concerned that the Long Bill, which details the state's budget, passed out of the senate this week with little effort on the part of legislators to put more money into our schools. Rather than rallying in support of sending more money to public education, lobbyists stayed close to the senate floor debate Wednesday night to ensure that K-12 didn't take more losses. [Read more about it here.](#)

Seriously folks, there are only 33 days left in the session (including weekends) and (as of press time) the School Finance Act has



still not been introduced. Right now, only \$25 million is allocated for the payback of the negative factor. The \$20 million for small rural schools that was included in the [superintendents' position statement](#) was cut back to \$10 million and included in the new [Rural Flexibility Bill \(HB 1321\)](#), which was approved by the House Education Committee Wednesday afternoon. [Details of the flexibility bill can be found in the legislative summary.](#)

Even though the state's economy is booming, legislators can't (or won't) spend the additional revenue on schools and other critical public services because they must save \$70 million for small TABOR rebates to taxpayers next year. CASB is working with legislators and other stakeholders to explore options for short and long-term relief from the fiscal constraints imposed by TABOR, and we urge you to discuss this

issue in your boardrooms and with your legislators. [Click here for more information on TABOR rebates.](#)

Things are finally heating up on the assessment front with hearings set to commence on key bills next week. House Bill 1323, sponsored by Representatives Buckner and Wilson, will be heard in the House Education Committee on Monday afternoon. The bill codifies the consensus recommendations of the [1202 Task Force](#) and is expected to pass out of the committee with some amendments. Details of the bill can be found in the [legislative summary.](#)

Senate Bill 257, sponsored by Senators Hill, Holbert and Merrifield, allows districts flexibility to adopt local assessments in lieu of state assessments and allows districts and/or BOCES to pilot alternative accountability and assessment systems with the approval of the state board. The bill will be heard in the Senate Education Committee on Thursday afternoon and is expected to pass out of the committee. Details of the bill can be found in the [legislative summary.](#)

CASB's legislative committee has not yet taken a formal position on either of the two key assessment bills. SB 257, which scales state assessments back to federal minimums and allows for a local assessment option, is more closely aligned with the resolutions adopted at CASB's 2014 Delegate Assembly.

Senate Bill 223, sponsored by Senators Holbert and Todd, requires school boards to adopt policies allowing parents to opt out of state and local assessments without penalty from the state or local districts. The bill passed out of the Senate Education Committee this week on a vote of 8-1 (Senator Johnston was the sole "no" vote) and is scheduled for debate on the Senate floor on Monday. [Read more about it here.](#)

CASB appreciates Senator Holbert's leadership on the opt-out issue and we understand that many of our members are supportive of this bill. However, CASB is in a "monitor" position at this time because other members have expressed concern over the perceived infringements on local control included in the bill, which go beyond the scope of the resolution adopted at our Delegate Assembly last fall.

Now is the time to contact your legislators and talk to them about your community's position on finance and any other issues of importance for your schools. If they don't hear from you, they can't represent you!

- Go to the [CASB Action Alert urging members to Restore Amendment 23 funding](#)
- View the joint [Statement of Support to Explore Creative Solutions for K-12 Funding](#), signed by CASB, CASE, Colorado BOCES Association, Colorado League of Charter Schools, Opportunity Coalition, CEA, AFT and Great Education Colorado
- Join Great Education Colorado in its push to [urge legislators to pass a budget that values education](#)

State Board Update

The state board will meet Wednesday and Thursday, April 8 and 9. We expect lively discussion and debates on a number of important issues, including:

Gifted and Talented Rule revisions required by HB 14-1102. The state board voted 4-3 to support the rules last month but they are being brought back after efforts to address board member concerns regarding data privacy and parent engagement.

Graduation Guidelines. The state board is expected to take action on the menu of college and career-ready competencies presented by CDE pursuant to the work of a subcommittee convened to address this issue. Many of our members have serious concerns about the [current recommendations](#) and we are paying close attention to this issue.

CMAS cut scores. The state board will reconsider its action at the March meeting where it rejected the CMAS cut scores set by CDE. The Board is being asked to adopt performance level descriptors and cut scores for CMAS and CoAlt high school science and social studies assessments so CDE can release the scores of students who took the exams in the fall of 2014.

Turn Around Interventions. The state board will receive reports from several schools and districts currently in their 4th year of turn around/priority improvement status under the state's accreditation system.

Joint Position Statement on ESEA

CASB, CASE, CEA and the CBA have issued a joint statement on the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). This position statement asserts that the Student Success Act (HR 5) is a solid starting point for a comprehensive, bipartisan reauthorization of ESEA. While key elements are supported by each organization, we believe changes are needed in order to gain full support. [Read the Joint Position Statement on ESEA here.](#)



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