

# Illinois General Assembly passes school funding reform

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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SPRINGFIELD - After issuing an amendatory veto on Senate Bill 1 (SB1) to "remove a bailout for the Chicago Public Schools," Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner is expected to sign the school funding legislation passed earlier today in Springfield.

The compromise includes more funding for school districts based on need, which will result in more revenue to more than 800 Illinois school districts, especially those most in need of extra funds. The compromise by legislators, however, included as much as \$75 million in tax credits for people who donate to private school scholarships.

The measure was passed Tuesday afternoon in the Illinois Senate with 38 in favor and 13 against.

Southwestern School District Superintendent Brad Skertich was in Springfield during the bill's passage through both the house and senate. He said Tuesday was the end of a fight he has been fighting for five years.

"This is historic school funding reform for all Illinois children," he said. "This is humbling and surreal. It will be good for all Illinois students."

Skertich was not too troubled by the \$75 million in tax credits for private schools offered in the compromise, either.

"The point of compromise is to give and take from all sides," he said. "I think the greater good is doing what is right for all children. I'm excited to see regular and stable funding for all our schools for the first time in seven years. It's been a long fight. It's been going on for around five years. It's nice to finally see it cross the finish line."

He had been advocating for the bill since it was first proposed by Illinois Senator Andy Manar (D-Bunker Hill).

Illinois Comptroller Susanna Mendoza weighed in with this statement:

*I thank legislators in both Houses from both parties for coming together to pass this historic bill to put school funding on a long-overdue path to equity in Illinois. Educators and most importantly parents and children everywhere in Illinois can finally exhale and have confidence that their schools will open and stay open. I have prepared my Office to release an estimated \$540 million in General State Aid owed to schools for the month of August as soon as the Governor signs the bill and after the State Board of Education transmits these vouchers to my Office. It is anticipated these payments will be issued within the next few days. My best wishes to all Illinois school children for a safe and productive school year.*

Surveys were also sent from Riverbender.com to every area superintendent asking what this legislation would mean to them. While it is coming before September, many districts in Illinois missed both the Aug. 10 and Aug. 20 dates for the reception of

general state aid payments. Those payments will most likely be made following the governor signing this legislation, which he has yet to do.

Rauner is expected to sign the legislation into law Wednesday.