

**Senate Committee Hearing
March 4, 2009
Springfield, IL, Capitol Building
Rm. 212**

Committee on Deficit Reduction

Outline of remarks by:
Dr. Brent Clark, Executive Director
Illinois Association of School Administrators

Thank you for taking testimony from the Illinois Association of School Administrators regarding deficit reduction for the Illinois budget as it relates to education funding. Representing public school districts, I would suggest the following in response to the questions that were posed to me regarding this topic.

Question 1: What areas of the state budget do you want preserved and why?

Answer 1: The funding areas that would most widely and deeply affect the financial viability of school districts would be Special Education Funding (attachment 1), Foundation Level Funding (attachment 2), Mandated Categorical Funding (attachment 3), School Construction (attachment 4), and unfunded mandates (attachment 5).

Question 2: What revenue enhancements would you recommend be implemented to support those areas?

Answer 2: It is imperative that whatever is the final determination of the state legislature and governor regarding a revenue enhancement; it must be reliable and sustainable. Without that assurance, districts cannot budget for personnel and programs beyond one year.

Some suggested sources of enhanced revenue would be an expansion of the sales tax base for services and an increase in the personal income tax rate. The motor fuel tax may also be enhanced for a capital program beyond roads and bridges to include public schools.

Question 3: What three areas of a school's budget are the most troublesome in terms of having enough money to offer an adequate education to all students?

Answer 3: Without question or hesitation, the cost to fund special education is spiraling out of control. We are taking money that should be going to regular education and spending it on

special education. Regular education isn't protected by federal law and special education is mandated and horrifically underfunded.

In addition, the other items mentioned in Answer 1 remain the same.

Finally, the timeliness of state payments is constantly a concern for school officials. These school officials are accountable on every imaginable level and certainly to their school boards, local taxpayers, and students. When they produce a school budget, they must show a certain amount of faith in the state's ability to fulfill their financial commitments on time. If you fail to deliver on your promises, there is no way they can deliver on their promises to their communities and those that depend on their services.

I will gladly take any questions.