



UEN Legislative Update January 31, 2025

This UEN Weekly Report from the 2025 Legislative Session includes:

- 2% SSA moves out of Senate Education Committee
- Governor's Cell Phone Bill is Introduced
- Civics Test Graduation Requirement and School Start Date Flexibility Bills
- Senate and House Education Committee Action
- Advocacy Actions for the Week
- Bill Tracker Detailing Actions on Committees, Subcommittees & New Bills for the Week

SSA Approved in Senate Education Committee at 2%

The Senate Education Committee approved a 2% increase in the State Supplementary Assistance rate, SSA, which is the percentage increase in the state cost per pupil that funds schools through the Iowa School Foundation Formula. The bill continues the property tax relief provisions, now buying down the foundation levy, as the goal of reducing all additional levies to the state average was achieved through property tax equity and relief funds (PTER) in the 2024-25 school year. A fiscal note will be written, but initially, the 2% matches the Governor's recommendation, with the LSA analysis indicating:

- The 2% increase costs the state an additional \$107 million for FY 2025-26.
- Declining enrollment of just over 3,000 students reduces the cost of the increase to the state, showing a 2% increase in the SCPP but a 1.36% increase in the regular program district cost (RPDC) statewide.
- 159 school districts are left on the budget guarantee, which delivers at most a 1% increase in RPDC, but there are 30 districts for whom this 2% change actually lowers their RPDC since it does not include budget guarantee from the prior year in the calculation. The total budget guarantee cost is \$25 million paid by property taxes.
- The estimated cost of TSS to fund the higher teacher pay minimums of \$50,000 for beginning teachers with up to 12-year-experience, and \$62,000 for teachers with at least 12-year-experience, is included in the estimate at \$48.9 million. That calculation will be done by DOM based on the most recent data available, which is currently the Oct. 2023 Fall BEDS count of FTEs.
- The Governor recommended the continuation of \$14 million for hourly staff pay, which would be in an appropriations bill later if it is funded.
- For comparison purposes, the cost of increasing eligibility for ESAs for the next school year costs the state an increase of \$96.4 million.

UEN is registered opposed to the bill, since the UEN priority requires an SSA level at least meeting the inflation rate (currently close to 3%). Express some gratitude to legislators for moving this bill quickly so districts can meet budget publication and public meeting deadlines.

Governor's Cell Phone Bills are Introduced

SSB 1065 and HSB 106 were introduced this week and assigned to their respective Education Committees. The bills require the following:

- Requires DE to distribute model policies (effective 7.1.25)
- Requires DE to consult with DHHS regarding the effects of social media on middle school students (Grades 6-8) and to develop PD for teachers to assist in providing instruction. (Adds such instruction to 6-8 requirements)
- Allows State BOE to adopt rules (effective 7.1.25)
- Requires School Boards to adopt, beginning July 1, 2025, policies to restrict student use of electronic devices during instructional time. Defines personal electronic devices and specifies exceptions, such as IEP or 504 or health plan requires the presence of electronic devices, or if parents request and provide a reasonable explanation for requiring student access to electronic devices (effective on enactment)
- Requires the Department of Public Safety and DE to advise school districts regarding any needed revisions to emergency plans which may be necessary due to these new policies, and to provide support and guidance. Requires revisions by school boards on or before July 1, 2025 (effective on enactment).
- Specifies that it's not an unfunded mandated

UEN is currently determining our registration, but is mostly concerned about the timelines. The State BOA should have time to get administrative rules in order and the DE should have time to develop sample policies before school boards are required to adopt them. Changes to the emergency plans should be timed with the implementation of the cell phone local board policies.

Civics Test for Graduation: Approved in a Senate Subcommittee and Passed by the House Education Committee

The House Education Committee passed HF 165 (formerly HSB 30) this week, sending it to the House Calendar. The bill requires that high school students pass the test given to new citizens by the Immigration and Naturalization Service with at least 60% correct in order to demonstrate knowledge of civics as a condition for high school graduation. It allows students to retake the test as many times as necessary. It requires the State Board of Education to administer rules regarding administration of the test. The bill does not mention accommodations for students with IEPs, 504 plans, or being served in English-Learner programs. UEN shared our concerns at the subcommittees meeting regarding the high-stakes nature of the test, the unengaging method of multiple-choice tests, the lack of attention to students with special needs or test anxiety, and the potential cost of accessing the test and administering it. We requested the ability for students in 7-8 grades who pass the test not be required to retake it in high school and that the timeline for school district implementation be delayed so students would have a few years to be exposed to the content and pass the test. UEN is registered opposed.

School Start Date Flexibility Bills

There are several versions, any of which would provide more flexibility than the current law. UEN is registered in support of all of the following:

- HF 67, which allows school to start on Aug. 20, assigned to the House Education Committee without further action.
- HF 11, which allows school to start on the first business day three days after conclusion of the state fair. Assigned to the House Education Committee without further action.
- HSB 31, which allows school to start on the Wednesday following the conclusion of the state fair. This bill was approved by the House Education Committee on Jan. 28 and is awaiting a new bill number to be assigned to the House Calendar.
- SSB 1036, which allows school to start as early as the Monday preceding the last Monday in August. This bill was approved by the Subcommittee on Jan. 30, moving it forward to the full Education Committee.

UEN Advocacy Resources

Check out the updated 2025 Session Advocacy Handbook, with everything advocacy beginners and experienced pros can use to advocate with legislators, at the statehouse or back in your district. Find the handbook on the [UEN Advocacy Website](#).

The Iowa Senate Democrats publish a list of legislative forums, which they will continue to update throughout the Session. Find out if and when any forums are scheduled in your area by checking out the list here <https://iowasenatedemocrats.com/events/> If you decide to attend and want to discuss what you might share or let us know what you heard at the forum, please reach out to margaret@iowaschoolfinance.com or call my cell (515)201-3755.

Advocacy Actions This Week:

Adequate School Funding: Contact legislators regarding SSA. SSB 1053, which sets an increase of 2.0%, falls short of inflation. The teacher salary investment last year was a really good start, but SSA has to keep pace or our staff and programs for students will be compromised. See the UEN Issue Brief for additional information. The deadline for deciding SSA is Feb. 13, so the advocacy window is tightening. Additional Supports:

- Download the [UEN 2025 Adequate School Funding Issue Brief](#), providing education funding history, comparing total Iowa education expenditures per pupil, which most recently ranked our state as 35th in the nation, now spending more than \$2,000 per student LESS than the national average, and including some talking points to help you advocate with your legislators. *UEN's Legislative Priority supports an SSA rate that at least matches the inflation rate schools are experiencing.*
- [ISFIS New Authority Calculator](#) allows users to set the SSA rate and calculate the impact for all districts for FY 2026 on your regular program (not including special education or other supplemental weightings or categoricals). Enter the SSA percentage increase and your Budget Enrollment and you can compare to the new money you'd receive if the SSA rate matched inflation (either 2.9% for CPI and 3.2% for Core Inflation) compared to the Governor's Recommendation of 2.0%.

Unfunded mandates: remind legislators that any bill requiring staff training or rewriting curriculum costs districts time and money. Unfunded mandates such as the mandatory Civics Test and Career Education curriculum in middle school require resources that take away from math, literacy or other key issues of district focus. Each mandate should bring with it the funding to implement or at least an increase in SSA so school districts do not have to make tough choices.

Connecting with Legislators: To call and leave a message at the Statehouse during the legislative session, the House switchboard operator number is 515.281.3221 and the Senate switchboard operator number is 515.281.3371. You can ask if they are available or leave a message for them to call you back. You can also ask them what's the best way to contact them during session. They may prefer email or text message or phone call based on their personal preferences.

Find out who your legislators are through the interactive map or address search posted on the Legislative Website here: <https://www.legis.iowa.gov/legislators/find>

Other UEN Advocacy Resources:

Check out the UEN Website at www.uen-ia.org to find Issue Briefs, these UEN Weekly Update Reports and Videos, UEN Calls to Action when immediate advocacy action is required, testimony presented to the State Board of Education, the DE or any legislative committee or public hearing, and links to fiscal information that may inform your work. The latest legislative actions from the Statehouse will be posted at: www.uen-ia.org/blogs-list. The 2025 UEN Advocacy Handbook will be available and posted shortly.

Bill Action This Week

Bill tracking will be updated soon. Find it attached to this report later.

Contact Us

Stay tuned for a thorough explanation of Statehouse actions this week .

Margaret Buckton
UEN Executive Director
margaret@iowaschoolfinance.com
515.201.3755 Cell

Thanks to our 2024-25 UEN Corporate Sponsors:

Special thank you to your UEN Corporate Sponsors for their support of UEN programs and services. Find information about how these organizations may help your district on the Corporate Sponsor page of the UEN website at www.uen-ia.org/uen-sponsors.



Solution Tree

Transform education worldwide to ensure learning for all

www.solutiontree.com/st-states/iowa