

**LWVIL Issues Briefing  
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**Education Funding  
Jean Pierce and Claire McIntyre, Issue Specialists**

In 2012, the League of Women Voters Illinois opposed several bills affecting property taxes. Each of these bills was defeated in the legislature. SB2862 and SB2073/HAM6 would have put a cap on property taxes. With the bulk of school funding coming from property taxes, it did not make sense to cap that source of money while costs of supplies, etc. would continue to rise with inflation. We also opposed HB4277/HAM1 which would have caused districts to pay a higher percentage of the costs of charter schools. This bill incorporated two recent trends which we have opposed: cost shifting from the state to local districts (thereby accentuating inequities between districts) and indiscriminate support for the proliferation of charter schools.

HB 5825 SA2 was another example of a bill which facilitated unbridled creation of charter schools. Despite League opposition, this bill did pass. It gave the state's Charter School Commission financial and oversight autonomy from the Illinois State Board of Education. While the League recognizes that charter schools are not inherently bad, only 17% have successfully outperformed students from traditional public schools. It is for this reason that our position stresses that charter schools need to be evaluated on an individual basis.

Acknowledging the trend for the state to shift costs to districts, LWVIL sent a letter to state leadership calling for a more sensible approach to the FY2013 budget, expressing our concerns about shifting pension costs to districts, and suggesting alternative sources of revenue. Nevertheless, we are still seeing bills proposed which would require districts to pay the state's pension contribution.

Unfortunately, the 2013 budget did nothing to increase funding to schools. In fact, state funding for education was reduced further, and additional cuts are expected in next year's budget. For instance, budget cuts to early childhood education have resulted in 114,000 fewer children being served. Furthermore, under the current budget, General State Aid (GSA) funds education at a level which is \$2000 less per student than minimal amount recommended by the Education Funding Advisory Board. One factor which contributed to this underfunding was the fact that GSA was flatlined to last year's appropriation and pro-rated by 11%, bringing what schools will actually receive down considerably.

Contrary to the observed trends, funding of Regional Offices of Education was restored to the state budget. The governor had assumed that consolidating ROEs by cutting the number in half would save money for the state. However, the Classrooms First Commission, which did reduce the offices by 25%, found that the governor's proposal would have actually cost the state \$1.2B.