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OBJECTS AND CHARTER RULES

STATEMENTS OF POSITION

STATEMENTS OF POLICY

CONTINUING POSITIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS ON JUVENILE JUSTICE

# **Explanation of Legislation Platform 2008-2010**

**This publication has been prepared to give our membership information and assistance in understanding our Illinois PTA positions and current State of Illinois practices, and as an aid in carrying out the third object of the PTA — “to secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.”**

## **Objects of the PTA**

To promote the welfare of children and youth in home, school, community, and place of worship.

To raise the standards of home life.

To secure adequate laws for the care and protection of children and youth.

To bring into closer relation the home and the school, that parents and teachers may cooperate intelligently in the education of children and youth.

To develop between educators and the general public such united efforts as will secure for all children and youth the highest advantages in physical, mental, social, and spiritual education.

## **Illinois PTA Charter Rules**

1. To carry on constructive work for better parenthood, better homes, better schools, and better communities.
2. To refrain from all partisan and factional political activities.
3. To refuse consideration by the association of personal grievances.
4. To participate in the decision-making process establishing school policy, recognizing that the legal responsibilities to make decisions have been delegated by the people to boards of education.
5. To cooperate with the superintendent, principal, and teachers in promoting the best interest of the school community.

**Acceptance of a charter binds an association to observance of these rules.**

## **Positions Established by the National PTA**

The Basic Policies, Statements of PTA Principles, and National PTA

Legislative Program can be found in the National PTA Annual Resources.

The Bylaws of the Illinois PTA obligate it to share the responsibility for the implementation of the Objects and Basic Policies of the National PTA

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# ILLINOIS PTA STATEMENTS OF POSITION

**Statements of Position clarify the Illinois PTA stand on certain timely and important issues. These positions are adopted from time to time at the state convention.**

## **Academic Freedom**

We believe that freedom to study, to learn, and to teach is essential to education in a democratic society. This freedom carries with it the responsibility to exercise judgment in its usage. Freedom does not imply license to impose social or political doctrines or personal and professional judgments regarding controversial issues on a student body.

We believe that while selection of instructional personnel and instructional materials is the responsibility of school boards and competent professional staff, parents should participate in the decision-making process. We further believe that every child has the right to all pertinent facts which are suitable to his level, through parents, teachers, textbooks, libraries and other educational media on every subject, including recognized scientific theory and unbiased political science, history, current international relations and current local issues.

The PTA believes that public education best serves a democratic society because public education is intended for all children and youth regardless of culture, of religion, of class and of educational goals.

## **Child Abuse**

The Illinois PTA is concerned with all children and their right to grow and develop in a healthy, safe environment. **ALL CHILDREN** are entitled to protection against all forms of abuse and neglect, cruelty, and exploitation.

## **Fund Raising**

The PTA, as an organization, has the responsibility of assuring that it has adequate funds through dues or fund raising projects to meet its needs. Funds raised by PTAs should be raised by the members of a PTA unit for the purposes defined in the budget

The National PTA has a long-standing position of disapproval of any project that involves children in the collecting of money. Recognizing that local PTA units have fund raising projects, **the Illinois PTA believes that children should not be used in fund raising projects in any manner that would cause them to solicit funds or sell items, including candy and food items, door to door or to persons unknown to them.** Fundraisers that can properly involve children might include recreational activities (fun fairs, roller skating parties, cultural outings); in-school events (hot dog days, book fairs); or providing appropriate items for sale (tee shirts, jackets, school items imprinted with school name).

**PTAs must remember that children should never be involved in any activity that might place them in an unsafe situation.**

## **Parental Responsibility**

We believe that parental responsibility includes the responsibility to:

1. Love, accept and respect their children,
2. Provide an adequate and safe home environment,
3. Provide a morally healthy community environment,
4. Provide an adequate school system,
5. Supervise the reading and recreational activities of their children,
6. Encourage an appreciation of cultural arts,
7. Teach good citizenship by example.

We believe that through an expansion of parent education in all divisions of PTA, parents would become more knowledgeable of children's physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs. In accepting these responsibilities parents build healthy personalities in children.

## **Protests**

We believe that verbal protests, petitions, and peaceful assemblies not designed to interfere with the operation of public institutions are in the best tradition and may be used to call attention to inequities and injustices.

We further believe that an adequate process must exist or be developed whereby students, teachers, administrators, parents, policy making boards, and other citizens may communicate freely so that constructive thinking of all parties may be expressed and considered.

Since nothing is more important than that the education of children and youth continue without interruption and without disruptive conflict, we believe that no unauthorized individual or group has the right to cause the closing of schools or jeopardize the safety of students, teachers, or school property.

We believe that during work stoppage or strikes by educational personnel, the PTA should act as a source of information, maintain its position as advocates for children, and urge educational personnel to return to work assignments while continuing negotiations.

## **Teacher Training**

We believe continued recruitment of teachers for the public schools is necessary. We encourage high school counselors to give positive advice to students who have expressed interest in the teaching profession.

We urge the Illinois Board of Higher Education, the State Board of Education, the Superintendent of Education for the state, and institutions of higher education to continue and improve teacher-training programs, relying on counseling and the operation of the free market to guide students into careers where their services are most needed.

## **Illinois PTA Statements of Policy**

**The following Statements of Policy direct the actions of the State PTA. These statements are adopted by the state board of managers.**

### **Local PTA Responsibility**

It is the responsibility of each local unit to uphold and support the bylaws, objects, and basic policies of the National PTA and Illinois PTA as contained in the double starred (\*\*) and number signed (#) items of each local unit's bylaws.

Illinois PTA Statements of Position, Statements of Policy, the Legislation Platform, Continuing Positions, Resolutions, and legislative positions, have been established by the delegates at Illinois PTA conventions, and by the State Board of Managers, to provide guidance for state officers and board members as well as local units, when speaking in behalf of children and youth.

PTA local units and individual PTA members, through local units are urged to bring their concerns to the attention of other members of the PTA by offering additions, amendments, or deletions to the National PTA Legislative Program, Illinois PTA Statements of Position or Legislation Platform, or by forwarding Resolutions for consideration by the Illinois PTA Convention, and/or the National PTA Convention.

### **Nonpartisan Policy as it Relates to School Boards**

The state board of managers of the Illinois PTA recognizes the importance of having the best-qualified persons possible as members of school boards. Local units should keep in mind the potential of the PTA for important, long range, constructive contributions to public education and not allow themselves to be drawn into support of individual candidates.

Any group activity in support of a specific candidate, or group of candidates, on the part of the local unit, council, district, or state branch is a violation of the nonpartisan policy of the National PTA. (Editor's note; It would also violate U.S Internal Revenue Service rules and regulations.)

There is no contradiction between the nonpartisan policy of the National PTA and privileges and responsibilities of its members as citizens in a democracy. The Illinois PTA encourages each member as an individual to accept his privileges as a citizen and to discharge the accompanying responsibilities. Citizenship offers individual choice.

When questions arise concerning caucuses, each shall be treated individually, and requests for help be put in writing and addressed to the Illinois PTA executive committee, accompanied by the bylaws of the caucus group.

Each local unit PTA should and must respect the members of their individual organization, and other levels of the PTA, by complying with each of the items listed below, which then allows the association to call itself a **"PTA Local Unit in Good Standing."**

## **PTA Local Units in Good Standing**

- \* Adhere to the Objects and basic policies of the PTA;
- \* Observe the Illinois PTA Charter Rules;
- \* Have bylaws reviewed every two years under the direction of the district director, amend the bylaws, use all prescribed procedures, and adhere to ALL of the bylaws of the local unit, some of which are required by the state or National PTA or by law;
- \* Return the (pink) registration forms, listing required officers and their addresses, and the date of election of officers to the Illinois PTA state office by the date stated on the pink form. Failure to complete and send this form will result in a unit receiving no state or National PTA mailings or membership cards until the form is received;
- \* All local unit elected officers must take required Illinois PTA leadership courses within time frames prescribed in the local unit bylaws, and attend leadership development programs;
- \* Remit a state and national dues payment to the state office no later than December 31<sup>st</sup>, for no less than twenty-five (25) members, ten (10) members for a new unit or existing unit where the school enrollment is less than one hundred (100). Failure to remit dues by this deadline will result in a unit being declared delinquent, being removed from the state and national mailing list, being ineligible to receive convention delegate credentials, being ineligible for PTA liability insurance coverage, being ineligible to participate in the National PTA Reflections program, and being notified that it will lose its United States Internal Revenue Service tax-exempt status under the Illinois PTA Group Exemption. Upon receipt of dues, these units shall be reinstated and participation in programs and services shall be in accordance with established procedures of the State Board of Managers;
- \* A unit that fails to pay dues before June 30th must follow reinstatement procedures. The unit shall discontinue use of the PTA name for all activities, including fund-raising, including use of the Illinois PTA tax-exempt letter and use of the Federal Employer Identification Number and fundraising, unless reinstated;
- \* Local units must return, or pay for, all unused PTA membership cards by June 25th;
- \* Any PTA membership cards that have been accidentally mutilated or damaged must be returned with the unused cards. Failure to return the cards shall cause the PTA to be invoiced for the membership dues reflected by the unused cards;
- \* Keep accurate minutes of all board and general meetings in a book with numbered pages;
- \* Use Illinois PTA procedures and materials to keep accurate and detailed financial records;
- \* Use Illinois PTA procedures, adopt an annual budget, fundraise only to fulfill budget requirements, bond its officers and all who handle money, audit financial records at least annually, and comply with the Internal Revenue Service requirements for nonprofit organizations including filing necessary report forms. When there is sufficient evidence of missing funds, **a local unit** will take proper legal steps, which may include filing a police report and reporting the missing funds to the Illinois PTA;
- \* Remit liability insurance payment or waiver form;
- \* Have members attend Illinois PTA leadership courses;
- \* Attend council and district meetings and conferences, Chicago Region Assemblies (in Chicago), and send delegates to the Illinois PTA State Convention and national PTA Convention in accordance with local bylaws;
- \* Take Illinois PTA leadership courses;
- \* Submit copies of all documents or materials as required in this section, to the district director, or any officer/representative of the Illinois PTA as assigned by the Illinois PTA executive committee, upon their written or oral request.

## **School Tax Referenda**

The Illinois PTA Legislation Platform states that the Illinois PTA supports "Adequate and equitable sources of revenue for schools." Further, it states support for "New sources of state revenue, including consideration of a state tax on services," and "Necessary increases or modifications on present taxes, such as the income tax, with the exception of an increase in state sales tax on basic items such as food and medicine."

Both of these positions make it very clear that PTAs must recognize that they have a clear responsibility to work to assure that our schools are adequately and equitably funded.

One of the major sources of monies for our schools is the local real estate (property) tax. The School Code authorizes certain maximum tax rates for school districts for real estate taxes in several funds. If a district feels it needs more local tax dollars than are allowed by the Code, it may ask the voters in their district for an increase in a tax rate for a specific fund through a school tax referendum.

Once a PTA has decided a request for a local real estate tax rate increase is necessary, it is absolutely appropriate for that PTA to enthusiastically support and actively work for a school tax referendum authorizing such an increase.

Supporting a school tax referendum is not a partisan political activity. Partisan political activity involves supporting a specific candidate, something PTAs cannot do. Supporting a school tax referendum is supporting an issue, and is a proper function of a PTA.

## **Unit Organization**

The Illinois PTA believes that each group of parents and teachers should have the type of PTA organization that best serves the needs of themselves, their children, and their community in keeping with the Purposes of the National PTA.

As a general rule, PTA units should be organized around a single school building with a corresponding autonomy. Coordination and cohesion of PTA activities in a school district are best brought about by means of a council of separate units. It is recognized that in some small communities a combined PTA may be best. However in many growing communities the combined PTA should move toward reorganization into separate units to give more effective help to parents, teachers, and children.

**A COMBINED UNIT** is any association, which includes membership from elementary through high school and/or membership from more than one building at the same grade level, but with single meetings and no sub-organization by building.

To meet the needs of a variety of individuals and to allow them to participate in the benefits of PTA, the following local units not affiliated with a single school building may be organized: early childhood, corporate, community or any other approved by the state board of managers.

**A VILLAGE PLAN UNIT** is any association serving two or more school buildings in a community operating under a single charter but subdivided into subgroups holding separate meetings with their own sub-officers and/or sub-chairmen. The district directors shall not permit the organization of village plan PTAs and in the future, no charter shall be issued to such units. It shall be the duty of field service representatives, district directors, and other state board members to implement the reorganization of those in existence.

It shall be the policy of the Illinois PTA that all materials shall be distributed on the basis of a chartered unit only with no additional distribution for combined or village plan organization except as such materials are available for purchase by all units.

The Illinois Cardinal PTSA offers membership in a STATEWIDE HONORARY UNIT. Honor unit members shall pay \$20.00 dues per year and membership shall include a subscription to the *ILLINOIS PTA BULLETIN*. The members may attend the state convention with non-voting visitor privileges upon payment of the convention registration fee. Honor Unit members may become fully active members upon payment of dues to a local PTA/PTSA.

## **Illinois PTA Continuing Positions**

**Continuing positions are active and current positions of the Illinois PTA. They are established to preserve positions taken in Resolutions that are more than three years old and according to our bylaws would otherwise be dropped. See Article XVIII - Sec. 5 and 6.**

### **Environment Concerns**

We will support legislation banning mass releases (launches) of latex and/or Mylar balloons. (1990)

We will support legislation that would protect children from the detrimental effects of electromagnetic fields. (1991)

We will support legislation to enforce more stringent standards for protection from indoor air contaminants as research continues to reveal sources and for improved ventilation standards and building codes for schools (1998)

## **Financing Public Schools**

We will actively support appropriating funds to permit school districts to employ teachers in a sufficient number to maintain a desirable pupil-teacher ratio, which should not preclude the utilization in appropriate situations of very large or very small groups. (1978)

We support enforcement of the State Mandates Act's intent that no legislation proposing new mandates for local school districts may be imposed without a provision for state funding (1982)

We will seek the appropriation of sufficient funds for elementary and secondary schools so that the state does provide the primary cost of public education statewide, and so that school districts can have adequate funding to provide quality teachers and curricula while maintaining maximum control by local school boards. (1983)

## **Health Issues**

We support including age appropriate information on eating disorders, healthy weight and risks of inadequate nutrition in health class curricula and teacher in-service opportunities. (2000)

## **Juvenile Justice**

We will work for legislation and funding to provide community programs to intervene with children who come into contact with the police as a result of childish wrong doings before the child's activities escalate into criminal acts demanding incarceration. (2001)

We urge PTA units to work within their county to improve its juvenile justice system, including pre-trial detention policies, and seek alternatives to pre-trial detention policies, and seek alternatives to pre-trial secure detention. PTAs are urged to join or form coalitions to address juvenile justice issues. (2001)

We strongly support adequate state funding for counties to provide alternative programs and services for the treatment of juvenile offenders to reduce the need for confinement in a Department of Juvenile Justice facility (2003)

## **Multi-Media**

We support television networks moderating the level of violence in programming and made-for-TV movies. (1987)

We support cautionary labeling of videotapes, recorded music, and music videos, which go beyond the emotional maturity level of some children and youth, so that parents may exercise parental discretion in supervising their children's viewing habits. (1987)

We support video outlets keeping X-rated videotapes in a separate area not open to children. (1987)

We oppose any advertising, which does not display a high sense of ethics and morality. (1987)

## **Non-Public Schools and Parental Choice**

We strongly oppose the use of public funds for non-public schools and will continue to work against any such appropriation of funds. We will participate in court actions instituted to challenge any laws, which would provide such aid. (1970)

We oppose requiring school boards to bus non-public students beyond district boundaries. (1980)

**While we continue to oppose the use of public funds in private schools, we will actively seek and support legislation that would require that non-public schools now receiving public funds or assistance meet all requirements demanded of public schools. (1985)**

We reaffirm the position to oppose Parental Choice legislation that would negatively impact local school funding or could result in inequitable educational opportunities for all children. (1989)

## **Safety Issues**

We support legislation to classify BB and pellet guns as Dangerous Weapons, Category II, with appropriate punishment for assaults. (1999)

We support legislation for a Child Access Prevention (CAP) law in Illinois that requires adults to keep guns safely and securely away from children, or be held criminally liable. (1999)

We support legislation requiring all riders under the age of 16, of all-terrain vehicles, mopeds, scooters, mini-bikes, and motorcycles, to wear helmets approved by the Department of Transportation and/or Snell Memorial Foundation, and support a mandatory penalty for the adult operator of a motorcycle who allows a child to ride without an appropriate helmet. (2000)

We will provide information and resources to constituent bodies on the prevention of bullying, encouraging them to share this information with parents, to assist parent involvement in development and implementation of student discipline policy and we will encourage the Illinois State Board of Education and Association of School

Boards to provide resources and training to teachers in conflict resolution and the prevention of social conflicts and bullying (2002)

We urge local units to disseminate information regarding backpack safety and to work with school staff to eliminate hazards associated with backpacks. (2003)

### **Schools and Education**

We support modifying the state mandate for physical education to allow more flexibility in meeting the educational, physical fitness and extracurricular needs of students. (1982)

We will support legislation that does not mandate state and local holidays as non-attendance school days, but gives each local school board the option to choose its own non-attendance school holidays. (1986)

We support legislation and/or regulations that would protect students from exploitation by prohibiting business from bringing into the school any program that would require a student to view advertising or to study specific instructional programs as a condition of the school receiving a donation of money or the donation or loan of equipment. (1989)

We support legislation and funding that would provide school nursing services and staff to render professional health care services on a daily basis in the public schools of Illinois. (1991)

We support legislation to insure adequate representation on the Illinois State Board of Education from all geographic regions of Illinois. (2000)

### **School Labor Issues**

During any negotiation process we urge teachers to refrain from attempting to influence the thinking of students by discussing pending or resolved issues unless appropriate to the subject area being taught. (1973)

We oppose laws, which require school boards to dismiss tenured teachers in order of seniority. (1980)

We reaffirm the position that the principal is the educational leader for the school, provides supervising school staff and students, and oversees the management of the school's physical plant. (1998)

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## **ILLINOIS PTA RECOMMENDATIONS ON *THE PLACEMENT AND CARE OF CHILDREN IN SUBSTITUTE CARE AND THE JUVENILE COURT SYSTEM*. 1999 TASK FORCE REPORT**

The Illinois PTA 1999 Convention adopted the recommendations of the *Report of the Placement and Care of Children in Substitute Care and the Juvenile Court System*, which was the result of a two-year study called for by a Resolution adopted by the 1997 Convention. The following recommendations from the report are now official positions of the Illinois PTA:

Maximum effort must be made to eliminate the pervasive effects of the use of illegal drugs by both adults and children. Increased prevention and treatment programs must be made available, particularly for parents and young people. The legislature must provide adequate funds for these prevention and intervention programs so as to assure services are available to all who need them.

Maximum effort must be made to assure that all children in Illinois complete their high school education.

Assure that the Guardian ad Litem assigned to every child under the jurisdiction of the court is trained to provide a continuing presence and support for the child, and assure that the best interests of the child are presented before the court regarding decisions such as placement.

Provide that children's attorneys shall not serve as their Guardian ad Litem, so as to avoid a conflict of interest.

Encourage the expansion of programs such as CASA (Court Appointed Special Advocates), which provide volunteers who investigate the situations of children coming before the court, and provide information and recommendations to the court.

Require that all children be provided with a continuity of services, including any foster care or residential services, as close to the child's home community as possible, preferably within the same county.

Provide increased attention and services for older children in the system, providing better preparation of teenagers for independent living.

Require proper training and certification/licensure of caseworkers, social workers and staff working with children in the child welfare system, along with competitive salaries to match these qualifications.

Require that caseworkers, social workers and staff maintain their certification with a program of continuing education.

Provide required training for foster parents, both traditional (not related to the child) and non-traditional (related to the child), including specialized training on handling children that have been exposed to drugs (crack babies), abused, neglected or who have emotional or behavioral problems.

Give foster parents adequate background information on the children entrusted to them so that they can better understand the children and more effectively meet their needs.

Assure appropriate monitoring of foster homes to better protect the welfare of the children placed in them, including a statewide placement database.

Provide on-going support for foster parents, including help for handling the specific needs of a child, and assistance such as respite care.

Provide adequate residential facilities in Illinois so that the state's children do not need to be placed out of state.

Require that the period of placement of children in residential facilities is of sufficient length to assure that the children receive all of the services they need to prepare them for future placement.

Require a continual process of evaluation of the programs offered by residential facilities, including follow-up on children who have completed such programs, so as to ascertain their programs' effectiveness and enable adjustments that will improve their success.

Provide additional financial support to public schools for enrolled foster children, who are in the care of DCFS and the juvenile courts, so as to assure that the schools can provide an appropriate educational program for these children as well as necessary psychological and social services.

Require that DCFS assure that school and medical records accompany the placement of children to substitute care and school settings.

Support the federal Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act, and adequate appropriations for its provisions, which provide financial support to states for programs that relate to juvenile justice.

Retain the jurisdiction of the juvenile court for youth under the age of 18. Without exception, jurisdiction of the juvenile court must be based on age, and not on the alleged crime. The determination as to whether a minor charged with a serious crime should be transferred to the criminal court for trial as an adult must be made by the juvenile court.

Require that judges hearing juvenile cases receive child development training.

Provide adequate intervention programs to assure the availability of graduated sanctions for juvenile offenders that begin with immediate non-conforming intervention at the first offense.

Provide sufficient Intervention Reporting Centers in every community/county to provide structured programs for youthful offenders, which require them to participate for specific hours, for a specific amount of time, in lieu of confinement to a juvenile detention center.

Provide for the placement of adjudicated (sentenced) juvenile offenders in juvenile detection or correctional centers as close to the child's home community as possible, preferably within the same county.

Provide appropriate rehabilitation, educational and other services for juveniles in detention and correctional facilities.

## **CONCLUSION**

The Illinois PTA urges working toward implementing these recommendations, so as to strengthen the system charged with caring for these children, that they can reach their full potential and achieve success as contributing adults in our state and nation.

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**A short explanation of the Legislation Platform of the Illinois PTA can be found on the Web site under the menu: *Take Action/Legislation Platform/Policies*.**

**Following is the Explanation of the Illinois PTA Legislation Platform**

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# EXPLANATION OF LEGISLATION PLATFORM

(Legislation Terminology is explained on page 33/34)

The figures used in this explanation are accurate only for the time at which they are written.

## The Illinois PTA promotes and supports:

### 1. State Constitution

#### Item 1-a. Constitutional revision that will promote directly the welfare of children

The most recent Illinois Constitution was adopted in December 1970. From time to time, there are amendments offered to this constitution. It is imperative that the Illinois PTA remains watchful and responsive to the effects that proposed amendments to the state constitution would have on the children of Illinois.

In 2007 the Illinois PTA joined an effort to gain sufficient signatures to place an amendment to the Constitution on the November 2008 General Election ballot to require 21 days before final passage of a bill in the legislature. The process is pending (as of January of 2008).

### 2. Taxation

#### Item 2-a. Revision of the Revenue Article

The Illinois PTA will support changes to the Revenue Article that improve the status of children.

The General Assembly has the power to place taxpayers or objects of taxation into groups for taxing purposes; the power to make allowances and exemptions, such as, removing sales tax from food, medicines, etc., thus making a less regressive sales tax possible; and the power to provide credits against one form of tax from taxes paid in other forms. It prohibits a graduated income tax; provides that the corporation income tax must never exceed individual income tax by more than the present ratio of 8 to 5; allows classification of real estate property in counties over 200,000 population, permitting industrial and commercial property to be assessed at a higher rate than residential; and prohibits taxing any personal property. Legislation enacted by the General Assembly replaced the revenue lost by local government units and school districts through elimination of the ad valorem and personal property tax, with an additional income tax on corporations, partnerships and voluntary trusts. The legislature adjusts tax rates and enacts various taxes as it sees fit.

#### Item 2-b. Adequate and equitable sources of revenue for schools.

The Illinois PTA believes the State must take seriously its responsibility as stated in Article X of the Illinois Constitution that, "The State has primary responsibility for financing the system of public education." This has been interpreted by many to mean that over 50% of the funding for the cost of education should come from the State, however, the courts have not put a percentage level of funding on the statement. The Illinois PTA has long sought a combination of state and local property taxes to support education that will best create a stable source of income when the economy fluctuates. Presently the heavy dependence on local property taxes to fund education contributes to inequitable funding of schools between districts because of varying property values.

The Illinois PTA believes that regardless of where a local school district's funds come from, great care must be taken to assure that local control of those schools is protected.

In 2007 the Illinois PTA issued a concise statement of our position on school funding reform, using this platform as its basis, which reads in part, "**The Illinois PTA will continue to seek legislative action that is designed to provide long-term, sustainable funding which fosters equity, respects local control, encourages improved teaching and learning, provides property tax relief, and addresses both the structural deficit and under-funded pension issues.**"

The Illinois PTA, in 2004, joined a coalition that proposes an increase in the income tax of 2%, with the increased funds to be used to provide property tax relief for owners, and an increase in funds for public schools. The proposal the PTA supports also includes imposition of a tax on certain services. The proposal also would provide funds to address the state's "structural deficit" which is a result of there being a shortfall in the amount of revenue available from the state's present taxes to adequately fund the services approved by the legislature. The legislation has not been enacted as of January 2008.

In 2007 the Governor proposed a Gross Receipts Tax on business to increase revenues. The proposal was defeated by the legislature after strong opposition.

As a result of the inability of the General Assembly and the Governor to agree on a FY 2008 state budget, (which should have been approved by the beginning of the fiscal year on July 1, 2007) the final budget was not adopted

until October 2007, long after the start of the fiscal year. A budget implementation bill (BIMP) which is necessary to spend any new funds above the level of the previous year's was signed by the Governor on January 5, 2008, with an amendatory veto of a technical nature, so the final approval of the bill was not until January 11, 2008, as PA 95-707. The result was that school districts were not receiving monies at the level of the *new* foundation amount until 2008 – six months late! Because the increased monies from the new foundation level were late, and many districts had anticipated the monies, to pay increased costs, some had to use reserves and even borrow monies to meet their costs. Of course, the increase costs will be paid by taxpayers.

**Item 2-c. Necessary legislation for improvements of assessment and taxation processes.**

The Illinois PTA will work for legislation, which would guarantee uniform tax assessments throughout the state. Legally all property should be assessed at a fair cash value, but this is far from the usual practice. Local support of schools is directly dependent upon the assessment of property. Assessment levels also affect the amount of equalization aid paid to local districts by the state.

The quality of local assessing is one of the most important factors in the equitable distribution of state aid to schools. Local PTAs are urged to maintain a serious interest in assessment practices in their own areas.

The legislature has authorized counties to impose tax caps in their jurisdictions, which limit tax resources available to schools, libraries, and park districts through the Property Tax Extension Limitation Act. Tax caps significantly impact the budgets of the schools in those counties that have enacted the caps, by limiting the increase in property tax extension to 5% or the percentage increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI), whichever is less. School districts can increase above the 5% limit only by approval by the voters through a referendum. Under the caps, school districts are limited to 5% or less even if insurance costs rise, utilities increase, and teachers demand a salary increase. Furthermore, there is no provision for school districts with increasing enrollment, even though there may be a need for additional staff or facilities.

The caps also limit school districts ability to levy for life-safety work in schools. As schools are unable to do the regular maintenance and repairs, school buildings are deteriorating. In response to concerns about the safety of minimally maintained buildings, the legislature reinstated previous bonding (borrowing) power to some districts. This is a more costly way to operate schools, since borrowed money (bonds) must be repaid with interest. Interest payments further deplete funds available for educations.

The Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB) was the latest advisory group created by the legislature to recommend a proposal for reforming the way education is funded in Illinois. While its proposal to increase the foundation level of funding for schools resulted in an increase, the state still has not met the recommended amount, and its recommendations for changing the way schools are funded remain only a proposal. It reported its recommendations in October of 2002 and updated its recommendation in the spring of 2005, the last time the Board was called in to meet by the Governor. Using the same formula used by EFAB, the recommended foundation level for FY 2008 would be \$6,974.

The actual foundation level for FY 2008 is \$5,734.

**Item 2-d. New sources of state revenue, including consideration of a state tax on services.**

The Illinois PTA continually studies the problems inherent in our present system of assessment and taxation. It will assist other advocates in their efforts to improve our present system of supporting public education and other programs and services important to us, including looking for new sources of revenue. The PTA will look at all proposals for new sources of income mindful of the need to be fair and not to unduly burden any one segment of our society, and doing our best to treat all taxpayers as fairly as possible.

One source of income that is gaining considerable support among some groups is a tax on services. This category of "services" might include such services as cleaning services, hair, nail, and skin care and other personal services, dry cleaning, consumer goods rental, marinas, travel services, business services, including copy work, amusement parks and arcades, golf courses and country clubs, interior design services, and so forth.

The Governor proposed a Gross Receipts Tax on businesses in 2007 but this was met with strong opposition from the business community and no support in the legislature.

The Lottery is one source of revenue, which contributes to the Common School Fund, but Lottery revenues represent no more than 8% of the state revenues supporting elementary and secondary education. The profits from the state lottery are all placed in the Common School Fund. This has no direct effect on the amount of money available for schools, since the Common School Fund makes up only part of the total revenues appropriated for education. There are many citizens who continue under the misunderstanding that lottery revenues are a large source of income for schools.

**Item 2-e. Necessary increases or modifications in present taxes, such as the income tax, with the exception of an increase in state sales tax on basic items such as food and medicine.**

The Illinois PTA, as an organization of responsible citizens, is aware that continuous requests for additional financial support for the schools impose an obligation to be willing to pay additional taxes. Therefore, while indicating our preference for a state income tax over other kinds of taxes, and while expressing our disapproval of any increase in sales taxes on food or medicine, since this sales tax is a regressive tax in that it falls most heavily on families with smaller incomes who spend a larger percentage of their income on taxable necessities, we acknowledge that increases in taxes will be needed if additional revenue is to be forthcoming.

The state of Illinois has an income tax formula adopted by the legislature in 1969. The rate is 3% on individuals and 4.8% on corporations, with exemptions for each family member on the individual tax, and one single exemption on the corporate tax. Presently, the Illinois PTA is actively supporting raising the income tax. The PTA has also supported a proposal to make the income tax progressive, with those making a higher income paying a higher income tax rate. Such a proposal would require an amendment to the Illinois State Constitution.

In piecemeal efforts to increase revenues that are available for education and other needs, the legislature has enacted taxes on a variety of items, such as interstate telephone calls, gasoline, and tobacco, among others. See item 2 d regarding gambling revenues.

Increasing reliance on riverboat gambling to provide funds to the state has fostered considerable debate on the merits of casino gambling for Illinois. Many groups oppose more state reliance on gambling proceeds, while supporters of more gambling have argued that the profits would be a boost to education funding.

The PTA and the education community should be careful to analyze any proposals for increasing the funding for education and other services, and not be lured by promises into acceptance of otherwise unpalatable revenue-providing proposals.

**Item 2-f. Designation and appropriation of all state taxes in a manner that best serves the need of the citizens of the state.**

The Illinois PTA believes that revenue, which is available to the state from whatever source, should be appropriated according to the need and merit of the various state programs. The Illinois PTA changed its long-held position opposing earmarking (designating a specific tax for a specific program) because legislators and the general public had lost faith that additional revenues collected in response to an increased need for funds by the public elementary and secondary schools would *actually* result in an increased appropriation for education unless it was earmarked. The lottery “shell game” is one basis of this distrust.

The Illinois PTA still believes the best method of funding programs, including education, would be accomplished without earmarking, nevertheless, in the political climate that exists, it is necessary for this organization to become more flexible on this issue.

**Item 2-g. Removal of unjust tax rate limitations on unit districts.**

The legislature determines the maximum tax rates which school districts may levy, one rate without referendum and a higher rate by referendum only. The combined permissible tax of the elementary district and the high school district in any area is more than the tax permitted a unit district in the same area. This means that the creation of a unit district in that area, with the same number of children to educate, would have less revenue to perform the same task. Some districts feel that this loss of revenue is not tolerable and this has discouraged the creation of unit districts. There have been some incentives created by the General Assembly to encourage consolidation of elementary and secondary districts into unit districts for the sake of efficiency.

In 2005-06 there were 377 elementary districts, 100 secondary districts, and 395 unit districts in Illinois, for a total of 872 districts.

The General State Aid formula calculation rates are 3.00% for unit districts, 2.30% for elementary districts and 1.05% for high school districts. These rates are used for formula calculation purposes only. Districts that have available local resources per pupil less than 93% of the foundation level qualify for the “foundation” formula.

**Item 2-h. Removal of present limitations on bonding power of school districts, to allow such districts to decide by local referendum the bonding power necessary to meet their individual needs.**

The Illinois PTA believes that taxpayers in local school districts should be permitted to determine how much they are willing to pay in order to have quality education. The General Assembly presently controls bonding limits.

### **3. Funding of Education**

#### **Item 3-a. Adequate legislative and/or financial support for the operation, maintenance, and construction of tax-supported schools, and opposes the direct or indirect use of public funds for non-public schools.**

The Illinois PTA believes that there should be equal educational opportunities for all children in the state irrespective of the wealth of the school district in which they live. The wealth of a school district is determined by the amount of assessed valuation of property that supports the local funding available to each child in that district. At the present time, because of an over-reliance on the property tax, Illinois has a huge gap between what school districts spend on education, even though low property value districts often have the highest property tax rates.

The Illinois PTA supports providing an annual adjustment in the state aid formula including a reflection of the rate of inflation (commonly known as a continuing appropriation); appropriating funds in advance of the school year to allow for more efficient fiscal management; and exempting public school districts from municipal and state taxes on utilities.

The Illinois PTA opposes the appropriation of any public funds for any schools which are not public schools controlled by and subject to the Illinois School Code.

In Illinois public education is supported mainly by local taxes through the property tax, but in some districts, only able to raise very limited funds from local property taxes, the major percentage of revenue is from general state aid. The state provides monies through the appropriation process at each session of the legislature from the Common School Fund and the General Revenue Fund. The federal government also provides some monies for education, mostly earmarked for specific programs. In the FY 06 of total education resources, the state provided only 32.3%, the federal level 10.2%, and the local level 57.5%.

Although there have been numerous decisions by the Supreme Court ruling against the use of public funds for non-public schools, the United States Supreme Court has declared constitutional a Minnesota law that allows tax deductions for educational expenses for both private and public schools, and has required Title I services and special education services to be provided in private and parochial schools under certain circumstances. There is legislation introduced in almost every session of the Illinois General Assembly providing for aid to non-public schools. The Illinois General Assembly provided for increased transportation services for non-public (and public) students by providing grants for transportation costs for qualified students. Many services are provided to non-public school students by the state, including transportation costs and monies from a free textbook fund.

In 1999, the governor of Illinois signed Public Act 91-009 into law providing tax credits for qualified educational expenses for tuition, book fees, and lab fees, for full time enrollment in a public or non-public elementary or secondary school. The Illinois PTA forcefully opposed this bill. We must continue to work against public dollars being expended on private education and against expansion of the present statute.

Many school districts have buildings that are inadequate, poorly maintained and in need of significant rehabilitation. In additions new schools are needed where community growth has occurred or school buildings are simply too old to be repaired. See item 3 e.

#### **Item 3-b. Increase in the state distributive funds for public schools until the amount contributed by the state to supplement local support shall fully guarantee an adequate and realistic foundation program.**

The effort to secure an adequate appropriation for the public schools each year is one of the continuous concerns of the Illinois PTA. The complexity of providing an adequate and realistic foundation program (education funding formula) for the schools of Illinois continues to perplex the legislature and debate has continued for many years. Once again in 2007 the legislature failed to enact legislation to reform the education funding system.

The inadequacy of the current system of funding is further complicated by wide variations in the assessed valuation of the properties in various districts around the state. While willing to increase their property tax rates in order to help the schools, some communities are so property poor (little or no commercial or industrial properties) that even the passage of a tax referendum does not cure the inequities. See Item 2 a. through h.

The education and economic status of the parents of the children served by the school district have significant impact on the educational services needed by the students, but a need for more services does not dictate the amount of funds available. The amount of local business in the community, and the value of real property are what determine the per-pupil expenditure.

The variations in the value of property in this state and assessment practices are a large part of the explanation of why local education funds vary so greatly, however, the resulting tremendous variation in funds available for districts re-emphasizes the need for the state funding formula to assure adequate funding for every school district. In 2005, the average operating expenditure of the five lowest spending districts in Illinois was \$4,977 per pupil and the average of the five highest spending districts was \$20,685 per pupil.

Tax caps in many counties keep schools from increasing revenues to sufficient levels. It is understood that many factors outside the control of the school district have a substantial impact on the amount of money needed to educate a child, i.e., the cost of living varies around the state affecting staff salaries, maintenance, and transportation expenses.

**Item 3-c. Support of full funding of all mandated educational and special programs.**

The Illinois PTA believes that whenever the state or federal government impose programs or requirements on local school districts, beyond the commonly accepted core curriculum, they should provide the resources to fund such requirements.

Examples of such mandates, often thought of as categorical programs, include driver, bilingual, and special education. Other examples might be new course or administrative requirements or changes in required services or taxing procedures. In 2005, increased course requirements for graduation from high school were imposed. The costs of these new course requirements in mathematics, writing, and science are measured in millions of dollars.

The state and federal government have often imposed changes without adequately funding them, causing local school districts to have to cut elsewhere or raise local taxes. The Illinois legislature passed the State Mandates Act to require the state to pay at least a specific portion of the expense of new laws that would affect local costs, but in practice they often simply exempt new legislative requirements from the provisions of the Mandates Act. Tax cap legislation is an “exempted” unfunded mandate for example. We support enforcement of the Mandate Act’s intent.

**Item 3-d. Support of distribution of state funds to local school districts affected by impactation as a result of state, county, or city agencies.**

The major source of income in most school districts is the property tax. Impactation occurs in a school district when a large percentage of pupils attending the schools come from families whose presence in the community is related to the existence of a large tax-exempt institution such as a university, state hospital, or military base, which do not pay local property taxes.

The Illinois PTA believes that impact aid should be provided to school districts equal to the difference between the amount of state aid per pupil and the per capita cost of education in the district for such pupils.

**Item 3-e. State support for safe public school building construction.**

There is a continuing need for a commitment to a school construction program. In many cases, this need includes basic new freestanding construction and renovation, rehabilitation, and additions to existing facilities. The need often depends on whether enrollments are growing or declining in a particular district. As buildings continue to age and deteriorate there is a definite need for replacement and/or renovation.

The Capital Development Board works with the Illinois State Board of Education to administer grants for school construction and renovation to local elementary and secondary school districts through the School Construction Program in addition to its construction duties.

To date, the School Construction Grant Program has benefited school districts in every region of the state, and provided several billion in state funds for building and renovating local public schools. For FY2006, there were no funds appropriated for School Construction Maintenance Projects. In 2007, a bill to reimburse some school districts that were approved for \$150 million in construction grants was passed, but signed so late by the Governor that FY 08 had begun and so the school districts could not access the monies. It is hoped that the legislature will again approve payment of those monies in FY 08.

The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has approved legislation to allow 51% of the school districts in a county to require a referendum on the ballot to authorize a tax for school facilities.

The first session of the 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly did not approve a statute for bonds for school and road construction. There have been no school construction funds made available by the General Assembly for several years.

**Item 3-f. Removal of existing inequities in distribution of state aid to local school districts.**

The Illinois PTA believes that the system of distributing state educational aid in Illinois should be so structured that all children will receive a quality education without any school district being penalized due to its lack of local wealth. This position would require a change in the current system of funding schools in Illinois.

**Item 3-g. Adequate appropriations for education of children who are: physically handicapped, maladjusted, learning disabled, educable, mentally handicapped, trainable mentally handicapped, speech defective, multiply handicapped, gifted, bilingual, educationally disadvantaged, in foster care, or homeless.**

The Illinois PTA believes that all children, regardless of their physical, mental, or emotional differences are entitled to an education that will develop their capacities and potentialities to as near their maximum as is possible. Legislation is required at the state level to provide standards and financial assistance necessary for the accomplishments of this objective. Local school funds alone are not adequate to provide special education because the per capita costs of educating exceptional children are considerably higher than they are for the average children.

In 1999, a task force appointed by the Illinois PTA to study the placement and care of children in substitute care and the juvenile court system (see the recommendations printed in the front of this booklet) reported that very often children under the care of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and the juvenile courts require psychological and social services in order to function more effectively in the classroom. Of particular concern are the needs of foster children, who frequently arrive at a school with no school or medical records. It falls on the schools to bear additional costs to serve many of the needs of these children. Furthermore, some school districts having temporary foster care homes and shelters within their geographical boundaries frequently see large numbers of students per year entering and leaving their schools within short periods of time. All of these children, even if attending school for only a short period of time, must be tested, placed, counseled, and served, providing an additional unreimbursed burden on the school's funds. The Illinois PTA believes these children also deserve a high quality education and does not want to see communities fighting the placement of such homes and shelters within their boundaries as a result of this financial burden.

The 2005 General Assembly passed PA 94-34 to require that every child in DCFS receive necessary behavioral health services, including mental health, trauma, substance abuse and developmental disability services.

We have supported legislation for funding (which is provided both by the federal government and our state), for children who, because of being low income, have special needs for education programs to provide the instruction and services which are required for these disadvantaged children to enable them to benefit from educational offerings and to prepare them to become successful students and citizens. We believe that the vicious cycle of generation after generation of dependent citizens must be broken, and we further believe that education programs offer some hope that this can be accomplished by the public schools.

We support transitional bilingual education where that program is possible. We also support other methods, funded through the use of bilingual funds, (like English as a Second Language) which some districts have found to be effective in helping children achieve English proficiency.

The Illinois PTA will continue to work for adequate appropriations so that every school district in Illinois can fulfill its legal and moral obligation to the special children in its district. The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly appropriated monies to increase the reimbursement to school districts for the cost of certificated special education personnel from \$8,000 to \$9,000, and from \$2,800 to \$3,500 for non-certificated personnel.

Public schools must pay for the educational services for handicapped students between 3 and 22 years of age (PA 95-14 passed by the General Assembly in 2007 extended the age to 22 from 21) even when placed in private schools.

The passage of Public law 94-142 (The Education of All Handicapped Children Act) by the U.S. Congress mandated a free appropriate public education for all children ages 3-21. Reauthorization of this law provides new requirements and also new opportunities for children with disabilities. Implementation and administration of the law imposes a particular financial burden on the local school district because the federal government has never come close to providing the funding levels it has promised, the state often fails to meet its goals for funding special education programs, and those goals are themselves do not provide an adequate level of funding to meet the costs of the programs. .

The federal government, as part of NCLB, (No Child Left Behind) the current version of federal law regarding education, now requires, as part of its testing program, that all children, including those designated as special education students, must be tested, and are expected, with certain exceptions, to meet the learning standards of the state. Any district or school that does not meet this expectation faces certain consequences that include being designated as not meeting AYP (adequate yearly progress). The federal funds directed to NCLB for FY 08 are expected to be \$974 million.

Illinois has authorized programs for birth to three-year-old handicapped children. The state has authorized preschools for children 3 to 5, who come from disadvantaged environments and are at risk of academic failure. These programs include a parent education component. The early childhood programs of the state are an expanding area, with the ultimate goal of pre-school being available to all children. Each year added appropriations add services for more children.

The state has provided for a residential math/science academy for gifted students. In *some* years there are funds appropriated for gifted education by the state. The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has adopted a statute requiring the payment of Advanced Placement test fees for students in schools with at least 40% free and reduced lunch students.

**Item 3-h. Provision for reimbursement for the continuance and expansion of an accredited summer school program.**

The Illinois PTA supports all measures designed to improve and strengthen the educational opportunities of boys and girls including summer school. The Illinois PTA believes that all children should be able to attend summer school if it would benefit their educational program.

Summer schools have been maintained by many local school districts for years, separate funding is now provided for programs for handicapped children. For some years there has been a separate appropriation for regular summer school, called the summer bridges program now titled Extended Learning Opportunities.

**Item 3-i. State aid for the school breakfast and lunch programs, with separation of the breakfast and lunch funds from the education fund.**

The school breakfast and lunch programs have long been supported by the PTA as important to the health, welfare and education of children. Their growth has been due to a partnership between the federal government, the state government, and the parents. The National PTA was a leader in advocating for healthy school meals, and for providing breakfast and lunch to every child who, because of low family income, is in need of a free or reduced cost lunch. Studies clearly demonstrate that good nutrition contributes to the ability of children to achieve in school, and maintain a healthy body, and for many children a school breakfast and lunch are critical to meeting that goal.

The Illinois PTA supports the concept that the school breakfast and lunch fund should be separated from the education fund to insure no curtailment of the education program and no difficulty in maintaining the school breakfast and lunch programs.

#### **4. Rights and Responsibilities**

**Item 4-a. Support of the First Amendment to the Constitution of the United States in its present form, and opposition to amendments to it which seek to establish governmental authority in religious observance in schools supported by public funds.**

There are ongoing attempts to amend the Constitution or pass legislation to permit prayers in public schools. The Supreme Court has ruled against a school prayer statute. No school may endorse religious activity or doctrine, nor may they coerce participation in religious activity. The U.S. Supreme Court ruled that public school sponsored graduation prayers violate the First Amendment's Establishment Clause. However, the Establishment Clause does not prohibit purely private religious speech by students. Students therefore have the same right to engage in individual or group prayer and religious discussion during the school day as they do to engage in other comparable activity.

The Illinois General Assembly passed a statute in the spring of 2007 *requiring* a moment of silence at the beginning of each school day with the participation of all pupils assembled. The Governor vetoed the bill, but the legislature overrode the veto, PA 95-680. The issue is controversial and the courts are now involved in the issue.

The Equal Access Act is designed to ensure that, consistent with the First Amendment, in secondary schools, which receive federal financial assistance, student religious activities are accorded the same access to public school facilities, as are student secular activities. A secondary school receiving Federal funds that allows one or more student non-curriculum-related clubs to meet on its premises during non-instructional time may not refuse access to student-initiated religious groups. The school retains the right to maintain order and discipline and may establish a policy that does not allow any non-curricular group of any kind to meet.

**Item 4-b. Support of implementation of the United States Supreme Court decision on desegregation of public schools. Support adequate funds for school districts to provide for additional costs for school desegregation.**

The Illinois PTA believes that all children regardless of color, race, or creed, sex, national origin, or handicapping conditions should have equal educational opportunities to develop to the limit of their capacities, and it therefore supports the implementation of the U.S. Supreme Court decisions on desegregation of the Public Schools.

The Illinois Supreme Court ruled that the State Board of Education does not have the authority to adopt rules for compliance with the Armstrong Act. (This act is that section of the Illinois School Code that deals with desegregation). Rather local school districts are charged with the responsibility of enforcing the Act.

Recent actions by various federal courts have begun to change the requirements of school districts with regard to previously court mandated desegregation programs. School districts have also been allowed to provide single sex schools.

**Item 4-c. Support legislation, which promotes National pride and patriotism, and preserves our National heritage.**

Included in the maturation and education of young people should be an appreciation of their country's heritage. Parents and schools together instill patriotism and pride in young people as they become knowledgeable about the history of the U.S., celebrate historical events and observe respect and loyalty to America by the adults around them. Loyalty and dedication to one's country include preserving national resources and obeying the laws of the land for the common good and consideration of all.

**Item 4-d. Equal job and educational opportunities for all people irrespective of race, color, creed, or sex.**

It is believed that in order for all children to have equal opportunity, irrespective of race, color, creed, or sex, it is necessary that parents be able to seek and find employment based on qualifications and irrespective of race, creed, color, or sex.

**Item 4-e. Adequate housing on a non-discriminatory basis to raise the standards of home life.**

The second object of the PTA states that one of the purposes of our organization is "To raise the standards of home life." Security is one of the primary needs of children, the lack of which can cause some serious behavior problems. Since adequate housing aids greatly in bringing this needed security to children, the Illinois PTA endorses better building codes, sanitation measures, and other services that will raise the standards of home life.

The Illinois PTA will continue to work for better housing for all children on a non-discriminatory basis, and local PTAs are urged to study the housing needs of their own communities, and work for good homes for all of their children.

**Item 4-f. Opposition to legalization and decriminalization of all types of illegal dangerous drugs.**

The Illinois PTA recognizes that the threat of illegal dangerous drugs is a continuing menace. We are particularly concerned that popularity and increasing use of certain drugs could create a movement to legalize them. Decriminalization is considered by some to be a first step in that direction and a softening of opposition to the use of certain drugs. We oppose these proposals.

The Illinois PTA continues to support programs to help addicts stop the use of illegal drugs; we strongly support education programs to help our youth avoid the use of any illegal drugs.

**Item 4 g. Strengthening and enforcing existing legislation to control sales, distribution, possession of firearms, and the sale of handgun ammunition.**

The Illinois PTA supports legislation that will restrict the manufacture of handguns and handgun ammunition. Police data indicates that there is a direct relationship between gun violence and gun availability.

We continue to oppose proposals that seek to weaken gun control laws.

The law requires the registration of guns and prohibits gun ownership to juveniles, convicted criminals, and/or persons who have a record of mental illness.

Bills to control the use of handguns are introduced in the Illinois General Assembly regularly. We support legislation, which provides increased safety measures such as trigger locks or requiring parents to keep firearms in lock boxes. We support legislation to classify BB and pellet guns as Dangerous Weapons, Category II, with appropriate punishment for assaults.

As a result of our efforts, the laws in Illinois are stronger than the Federal law. However, we continue work to keep weapons out of the hands of those that would seek to harm our children and all citizens.

The Illinois PTA is aware that there have been proposals to allow persons to carry concealed weapons, which we would not support based on this position.

**Item 4-h. Support of legislation designed to increase dissemination of information and services for voluntary family planning, which would include the dissemination of information pertaining to venereal disease (ed. note, more commonly know as “sexually transmitted diseases”) and prevention of teenage pregnancies.**

The Illinois PTA has concern for maternal and child health, family stability and responsible parenthood. It believes that encouragement of voluntary family planning and the wide dissemination of birth control information will help maintain all of these at optimum levels.

The PTA is concerned that sexually active young people should receive adequate and medically and biologically accurate information to be able to properly care for themselves especially in their teen years, to prevent pregnancy and sexually transmitted (venereal) diseases.

It is very important for young people to receive the information early enough to understand the risk of early pregnancy and possibility of sexually transmitted disease resulting from sexual relations.

The PTA supports abstinence *first*, programs, while objecting to abstinence *only* programs, which fail to provide information on birth control and the prevention of sexually transmitted disease should the young person be sexually active.

The PTA supports educating students, school personnel and parents about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), and furthermore we urge school boards, in consultation with parents, to implement an AIDS policy. (See 10-c.)

Some school-based health clinics provide family planning services and dispense contraceptives. The Illinois PTA supports the right of local districts, in consultation with their parents and community, to provide such services for those students whose parents give them permission to receive them.

**Item 4-i. Extension and support of library services, without censorship of library materials under protection of the U.S. Constitution, First Amendment.**

The importance of library services, the maintenance of free public libraries, bookmobiles, and operation of these services continue to be of prime importance to all parents and have always been stressed by the Illinois PTA. It is the goal of the Illinois PTA that adequate public library services be made available to citizens of all communities.

Local PTA units should be informed about the adequacy of public library facilities in their own communities and should take an active part in creating public awareness of the value of good public libraries.

The responsibility of library books and materials selection rests with the elected library board. There is a process to be used by the general public to voice their concerns about the selection of library books and material.

## **5. School Governance**

**Item 5-a. Adequate legislative and/or financial support for the efficient administration of public schools.**

It is important for the Illinois PTA to support legislation for the efficient administration of schools. An efficient administration should be able to provide a better delivery of educational services to the children and more importantly an efficient administration should be less costly, thereby making more dollars available for the instructional program of the students.

The Illinois PTA supports regular events, which train administrators in providing instructional leadership, establishing productive parent-school relationships and establishing a high quality school climate. Administrators must be recertified regularly based on Illinois standards for administrators, and criteria specified in the School Code.

**Item 5-b. Adequate legislation, including implementing rules and regulations, to insure maximum local control within each school district.**

PTA believes, that regardless of the state’s contribution to the financing of local schools, the control and responsibility for the schools should remain primarily with local school boards. The boards in turn will remain accountable to the local electorate. *Our position on more financial support from state sources in no way conflicts with our position on local control.* We oppose eroding the authority of locally elected school boards.

School districts in Illinois are controlled by their respective local school boards, most of which are elected by the people of the school district. Local school boards are responsible for the quality of education in their district. Every district has problems unique to itself. With local control, these problems and needs of the children within a community can be met more adequately and in less time. Certainly the Illinois PTA supports having help from the Illinois State Board of Education available to local school boards when this help is needed.

The No Child Left Behind federal education statute places new requirements on the state to provide test results of students to schools, parents and the public, and place schools not meeting certain levels of meeting standards in

categories, which eventually could result in state oversight or takeover. The Illinois PTA urges its local units to become aware of their school's test results and status.

**Item 5-c. School district reorganization with increased support for pupil transportation.**

Where local school districts wish to reorganize, the Illinois PTA believes they should be able to do so. Districts should be able to tax for transportation at a sufficiently high rate to cover the cost of this service.

To insure an efficient system of high quality public educational institutions and services, it is apparent that some school reorganization should take place. Authorities have felt that there are appropriate size parameters for administration, attendance and support of schools, which would improve the educational opportunities for Illinois children. Over the years, some reorganization has taken place. In 2006, there were 873 school districts in Illinois.

Personal attachments and relationships with schools are sometimes affected when economy and efficiency measures cause schools to close or consolidate because of declining enrollment or become very large because of increasing enrollment. Wide differences in financial ability between adjoining districts is often an important factor in creating a resistance on the part of wealthy districts to combine with poorer districts.

The General Assembly has passed bills that affect districts that want to reorganize. They provide supplementary state aid payments to reflect changes in salary schedules and facility needs; provide supplemental state aid for payment of deficits; provide that boundaries of a consolidated district may not be changed if the change would create a district of less equalized assessed valuation and population than required for the creation of such a district; and provide that effects of proposed boundary changes must be submitted to the regional board.

**Item 5-d. Non-partisan state board of education.**

The Illinois PTA worked for 35 years to achieve the creation of a State Board of Education. The 1970 Illinois Constitution mandated the State Board of Education.

We believe that this board should continue to be composed of lay citizens who are vitally interested in education and in adequately financed public schools. We support legislation to ensure adequate representation on the board from all geographic regions of the state.

From 1973 through 1996, the board consisted of 17 members who elected their own chairman. In 1996, legislation, opposed by the Illinois PTA, reduced the size of the State Board of Education, leaving many high-population areas of the state unrepresented. The board presently is composed of 9 members selected by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate. The Governor also selects the board chairman. The State Board has the constitutional power to select the State Superintendent. However, in 2004, the 93<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly amended the statutes (PA93-1036) regarding the board, so that the Governor after his/her election selects the board members whose terms are ending. Also, the State Superintendent's contract is now coterminous with the term of the Governor, so that the newly elected or reelected governor has direct input into the choice of the State Superintendent. It should be noted that the Illinois PTA strongly opposed this new process.

In 2007, the General Assembly passed PA 95-626 which creates the Illinois P-20 Council to study and make recommendations concerning education at all levels to avoid fragmentation of policies, promote improved teaching and learning, strong accountability and efficiency.

**Item 5-e. Opposition to state censorship of textbooks, teaching materials, and library materials, since these problems lie within the jurisdiction and responsibility of locally appointed or elected school boards.**

The Illinois PTA continues its opposition to state censorship of textbooks, teaching materials and library materials. It is the position of the Illinois PTA that this responsibility should remain with the local school board. However, local school boards should adopt a policy for challenged materials that provides a process to review any materials or textbooks of questionable use.

Further, we believe local PTA units should work cooperatively with their local boards of education to establish advisory textbook selection and review committees, which should include parents, classroom teachers and administrators.

**Item 5-f. Improved standards for certification and continuous review of teachers, with supportive services to help keep them keep abreast of today's problems and techniques, in order to insure the highest standards of teaching in every school district.**

The Illinois PTA continues to support legislation for improved standards of certification. We believe that certification of teachers with inadequate training lowers the quality of teaching in the public schools. In 1999, the entire teacher recertification process was redesigned. There are three levels of certification, Initial (4 years for a new teacher), Standard (five years, renewable) and Master (ten years, renewable). Teachers are now required to

participate in a program of continuing education in order to be eligible to renew their certification at the end of the period of their certificate. The only way a teacher can achieve Master certification is by the process of obtaining National Board Certification through the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards. The cost of this program is supported by the state. Master teacher status provides an annual stipend from the state along with opportunities to be paid for mentoring other teachers.

The continuing education of teachers should provide them with the latest teaching techniques, availability of resources in the program area being taught and the publication and distribution of the most recent materials, both printed and audio-visual. We support in-service training of teachers and administrators in the early detection and diagnosis, and principles of remediation, of learning disabilities in children as well as techniques to encourage ongoing parent involvement.

The federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) requires that school districts provide “qualified” teachers in all of their classrooms. Qualified teachers are defined as those prepared and certified by the state to teach the subjects that they are in fact teaching. Each state provides avenues for teachers to become qualified in subjects. Further in schools receiving federal Title I funds, parents must be informed by letter if they have a students in classes being taught by an “unqualified” teacher.

**Item 5-g. To maintain a high professional scale of salaries for teachers.**

We believe that high standards and adequate compensation will make the teaching profession more attractive to competent young people and will produce better teachers in the long run.

We believe that all children should have access to high quality teachers, although at the present, the wide range of financial wealth of school districts often makes this difficult.

**Item 5-h. Enactment of legislation by the General Assembly which will provide specific collective bargaining procedures for conducting school board-teacher negotiations and resolving impasse, excluding mandatory binding arbitration.**

School board-teacher negotiations directly affect the welfare of children and youth - the primary concern of the Illinois PTA.

Although the Illinois PTA believes there should be procedures for negotiations, we do not support legislation that has taken away some of the power of local school boards to administer the public schools.

We will support collective bargaining legislation that safeguards a school board’s responsibility to govern its educational activities; prohibits provisions for closed agency, union shops, or maintenance of membership; and which limits the scope of negotiations to salary, fringe benefits and working conditions that most directly affect teachers’ or other board employees’ employment.

We urge that negotiations be held at a time that would insure an uninterrupted school year and reduce the threat of a strike.

The Illinois collective bargaining law covers all educational personnel. It provides that all employees have the right to organize. It provides procedures for bargaining, allows strikes after certain procedures have been followed, and allows a fair share fee requirement for nonunion members. Mandatory arbitration is not required.

The General Assembly passed legislation changing the balance of power between unions and school boards by allowing the State Board of Education to require a district to make up all days lost by strike or face losing all their state aid.

## **6. Educational Quality Programs**

**Item 6-a. Support of legislation which would improve the quality of education.**

The Illinois PTA is stating with this position that it adds to its legislative goals, a demand on the public school system that it meet its responsibility of assuring every child an education relevant to his/her needs.

The Illinois PTA supports alternative programs that are varied in their use of instructional modes or techniques to serve students who do not respond in the traditional school setting. It has been demonstrated that different students succeed in different programs.

The Illinois PTA supports a provision to raise the compulsory attendance age to 18 since programs have now been designed to provide alternative programs for students unable to succeed in the regular classroom. Adequate education is necessary to allow for success in the work force as adults.

If there has been a commitment lacking on the part of our school systems, our state government, and our society to the concept that every child CAN learn, it is past time that the necessary resources be provided to make this possibility a reality.

In 1997, the Illinois State Board of Education adopted “Illinois Learning Standards” for the basic areas of language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, fine arts, and physical development and health. In 1999, a new process of assessment based on the Learning Standards was adopted, the Illinois Standards Achievement Tests (ISAT), with individual student test scores being provided to the schools. Beginning in 2001, high school juniors were given the Prairie State Achievement Examination (PSAE), which is used to evaluate the progress that high schools have made toward meeting the Illinois Learning Standards. This test also includes the American College Test (ACT) which is one of the nationally given college entrance exams. Limited English proficient students are given the IMAGE (Illinois Measure of Annual Growth in English) test, and students with disabilities are tested using either the ISAT with accommodations, or a limited number are given the IAA (Illinois Alternate Assessment).

In 2004, all tests except those required by the federal NCLB (No Child Left Behind), which are reading, math, and eventually science, were eliminated from the ISAT and PSAE. The Illinois PTA opposes the lack of testing based on all of the standards, since parents can no longer evaluate their students based on all the areas of learning, and especially supports the testing of the arts. The 94<sup>th</sup> General Assembly did act to restore the writing portion of the tests, which was phased in beginning in 2006, even though this is not required by NCLB.

In order to meet NCLB standards for testing, since 2006, every child in grades 3-8, and once in high school is tested in reading and math, and will in the future be tested in science also. The Illinois State Board of Education once again revised its tests and process to meet these requirements. The Illinois PTA has a position favoring the state being allowed to use the “growth model” of testing, which tracks the progress on the yearly test of each student over time, rather than comparing one grade (for example 3<sup>rd</sup> with the next year’s 3<sup>rd</sup> grade) as is done now.

Schools must develop a “school improvement plan” based on student achievement from the local assessment test. The schools analyze the student achievement data and then develop plans to improve student learning.

The federal (NCLB) statute now requires progress in every school, every year, toward every child meeting or exceeding the Illinois Standards by 2014. Failure to meet the increasing percentage of students meeting or exceeding the standards (Adequate Yearly Progress – AYP) will result in the school being placed on Academic Warning or Watch lists, with eventual consequences of state intervention. Further, student test data is disaggregated by subgroups (race/ethnicity, economic disadvantage, limited English proficient, students with disabilities, grade level, subject matter) for each test in reading and math at the grade levels tested. Any one group failing to make AYP results in the entire school listed as failing to make AYP. For schools that receive federal Title I funds, failure to achieve AYP eventually has progressive consequences which include offering students choice of attending another school in the district and tutoring and supplemental services.

All schools that fail to meet AYP face consequences that may include teacher staff development, and eventually the possibility or reorganization or closing of the school.

The NCLB act is due for reauthorization by the Congress in 2008. While it is expected the testing requirement will remain, it may be altered to allow for different testing procedures, it is still expected that the requirement that all students will be expected to reach proficiency by 2014 will remain.

**Item 6-b. Retention and extension of the kindergarten, the junior colleges, state colleges, and universities, as integral parts of the public school program.**

The Illinois PTA strongly supports excellent kindergarten programs as well as higher education programs for post secondary students. We also support preschool and full-day kindergarten programs, particularly for at-risk children, so that they may begin first grade ready to achieve at grade level.

Every school district is required to operate a kindergarten program. While Illinois law does not mandate enrollment in kindergarten, participation in a kindergarten program has important educational advantages, which are available to all children.

Full-day kindergarten may be offered and is funded at the same rate as first grade, for districts that wish such a program. However, half-day kindergarten must also be available. The entrance age is five by September 1. Under some circumstances, younger children may be admitted upon testing to assure readiness.

Illinois has a state system of junior colleges, administered by a state Junior College Board. The law provides for the establishment of junior colleges in all areas of the state, with state reimbursement for capital investment and operating costs. The junior college districts are required to have separate boards and a separate tax rate.

Every school district is required to be included in a new or existing community college district.

The State Board of Education regularly works with the Higher Education Board, and increasingly the educational system is viewed as an integrated one of K – 16, and even Pre-K – 20 with a view that all of the educational system should be viewed as one continuum.

In PA 95-626, the 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly established an Illinois P-20 Council to study and make recommendations concerning education at all levels to avoid fragmentation of policies, and promote improved teaching and learning. This statute also abolishes the Joint Education Committee.

**Item 6-c. Support of the development of school library and media programs.**

The Illinois PTA believes that school libraries and media programs should be developed in every public elementary and secondary school district in the state. We support legislation that would provide the needed financial aid for such facilities and programs.

The General Assembly has passed legislation that provides grants to local school districts for operation of satellite educational network systems and telecommunication instruction programs. The state board of education has a grant program, Technology for Success, which provides funds to build local and area-wide networks, provide technology infrastructure and equipment, and supports technology programs.

Illinois has a Virtual High School, which provides students with access to semester-long courses, also AP review courses, and is a growing program.

**Item 6-d. Support monitoring the use of instructional materials which require students to view and/or read commercial advertisements.**

We support private sector/public school relationships and technology, which improve the instructional programs of our schools. We oppose any use of instructional materials that require our children to read or watch commercial advertising as a condition for receiving those instructional aids.

**Item 6-e. Adequate legislative and/or financial support for career and vocational education.**

The Illinois PTA continues to press for adequate appropriations for increased technical and vocational (trade and career) programs. The PTA encourages all schools to provide adequate curricula, counseling, and presentations by career and trade representatives in order to help students plan their futures.

Social scientists, who are concerned with such problems as school dropouts, have emphasized the need for expanded programs of vocational education. Some federal assistance comes to Illinois in the field of vocational education.

The SBE budget includes monies for Career and Technical Education and Agricultural Education.

## **7. Protection of Children and Youth**

**Item 7-a. Adequate legislative and/or financial support for the protection, health and welfare of children and youth.**

The Illinois PTA believes that the citizens of Illinois, through their state and local governments, must provide adequate laws and/or financial support in all areas needed to assure the protection, health and welfare of the children and youth of this state, so that they will be protected from any harm, and so that they can grow and learn in a safe and secure environment, with their health safeguarded, and their welfare carefully considered in all necessary ways.

The legislature created the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) to assure the protection, health and welfare of all children and youth that are particularly "at risk" and in need. After studying this system, recommendations for improving and protecting the lives of children in the care of DCFS were adopted by the Illinois sitting in convention. Those recommendations are printed in the front of this booklet.

The Illinois PTA works continually to support those statutes that would be beneficial for our children and youth, and to oppose those statutes that would be harmful.

The General Assembly regularly passes legislation intended to improve and expand DCFS services especially in the area of abused children services, but lack of adequate funds continues to hamper proper services to those who need them.

**Item 7-b. Adequate legislative and/or financial support for improvement of the protection, health and welfare of children in substitute care.**

The Illinois PTA is actively working to assure that the care of the abused, neglected and/or abandoned children who enter our child welfare system receive the finest care that can be provided. They enter the system under the supervision of the Juvenile Court in each county and then come under the care of the Department of Children and Family Services. The Illinois PTA is as concerned about the educational and other services provided for these children as it is for the children living in traditional family situations.

The number of children in the care of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) continues to decline, however those that remain in the system, and those who are entering it now, often have serious problems

and social needs which are expensive to treat. Mental health services for abused and neglected children continue to be inadequate.

Most children in substitute care are in foster care, either with a family member (non-traditional) or unrelated foster family (traditional). Severely troubled youths may be placed in an institutional care setting for treatment, at least until they can be placed in a foster family, or returned home.

Statutes continue to be adopted to increase the information foster parents and adopting parent receive regarding children, so that they are better prepared to handle the children. To further protect the children, the 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly passed a law requiring every prospective foster or adoptive parent to undergo a criminal background check, including fingerprint check at the federal level.

Most foster children are educated in the public schools. The Illinois PTA recognizes that these children need special services, and we continue to work to secure funds for public schools to help with the cost of these services.

**Item 7-c. Support of adoption laws and procedures designed to protect the welfare of children.**

Adoption is an important part of the social process. Legislation dealing with adoption and guardianship of minors should be carefully monitored. These laws should provide protection for the child from unnecessary separation from parents, from adoption by unfit persons, and from interference when placed in adoptive homes.

Recent legislation makes it clear that the interests of the child should be primary in custody decisions, as noted above, prospective adoptive parents must pass a criminal background check. Many families adopting children continue to receive financial help as well as medical, mental health and social services.

**Item 7-d. Improvement and enforcement of child labor laws, and opposition to lowering the age limit in the present Child Labor Law.**

The Illinois PTA constantly guards the present child labor laws, which were obtained after years of effort. The laws protect children by prohibiting the employment of children under the age of 16 during school hours. Children 14 and 15 years old may be employed during vacation and outside of school hours, but they are prohibited from working in any of the hazardous occupations specified in the law. Employment of children in agriculture, domestic work, and in the sale and distribution of magazines and newspapers is permitted.

The Illinois PTA will continue to support and strengthen the present federal laws, and will oppose any attempt to weaken the protection now afforded children by federal and state laws.

**Item 7-e. Strengthening of existing laws and enforcement procedures, designed to deter sales and distribution of narcotics, hallucinatory agents, alcohol, and dangerous drugs to children and youth.**

The Illinois PTA will support any effective legislation, which recognizes the criminal intent of those persons who deliberately impose addiction upon young people for their own profit.

While there is no substitute for community concern for enforcement of laws regarding the sale of drug paraphernalia, narcotics and other drugs to young people, the Illinois PTA believes the peddling or “pushing” of narcotics, LSD and other drugs in the vicinity of schools is a serious concern, and the legislature has responded by increasing the penalties for dealing drugs in or near schools. Look alike drugs and drug paraphernalia are illegal in Illinois.

The PTA believes that effective education to prevent use of drugs is a strong deterrent. The PTA continues to work actively to assure that young drug offenders receive treatment, intervention and rehabilitation services rather than inappropriate confinement or conviction in an adult court.

The Narcotics Profit Forfeiture Act mandates the forfeiture of money and other assets generated by narcotics racketeering activities. Not only are the profits from such illegal activity thus taken away, but the monies will be available for enforcement and the cost of prosecution of narcotics law violators.

Recent General Assemblies have strengthened laws by: forbidding sale of “designer” drugs and providing criminal penalties for renting hotel rooms to or for minors who consume alcohol in them.

Through diligent long-term efforts of the Illinois PTA, in coalition with other advocacy organizations, we worked with the Secretary of State to lower the blood alcohol content (BAC) limit for all drivers to .08 from .10 for the purpose of designating DUI in Illinois for all ages. The Zero Tolerance Law allows suspension of a minor’s driver’s license for driving under the influence of any level of alcohol.

The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has continued strengthening statutes that increase the penalties for adults who fail to control access to liquor for minors, including permitting their residence to be used to provide access to liquor, making the a Class 4 felony.

**Item 7-f. Support of state legislation, which provides proper laws in regard to sexual crimes against children.**

The Illinois PTA believes children must be absolutely protected against sexual abuse, use, and actions classified as sexual crimes. The Illinois PTA has taken a leadership role in having legislation introduced and passed that implements this position.

The General Assembly has been very responsive to the problem of sexual abuse of children, with the passage of bills amending the Criminal Code that are intended to protect children from the offense of obscenity through severe penalties; the offense of indecent liberties including soliciting, permitting or photographing sexual acts involving a child under 16; providing any person having care or custody of a child commits indecent liberties with a child if he or she knowingly allows or arranges for a child to participate in those indecencies; and a new definition of obscene, harmful material, and sexual conduct to include permitting any minor to attend any play, dance, or performance that is harmful, with standards for evaluating whether a material or a performance is harmful.

The law requires a sexual assault examination (by a physician) of any child 12 or under suspected of carrying a sexually transmitted disease, with all diagnosed cases to be reported immediately via a hotline to DCFS. These laws have been enacted with the specific intent of further protecting abused children.

Strengthened laws against sexual exploitation of children, include: newly hired teachers and child care workers must have a criminal background check to assure no sex/drug crime convictions; the statute of limitations for sex crimes has been extended; it is illegal to lure a child into a vehicle; repeated sex offenders must register with the police; the list of persons required to report suspected child abuse has been extended; court personnel are being trained to reduce trauma to child witnesses; child testimony can be videotaped in order to make it easier for children to testify; legislation was passed requiring the registration, upon their release from prison, of convicted child molesters and sexual predators with local police officials; and that those names and locations be provided to all schools and day care centers in the community, and made available to all members of the community upon request. Legislation supported by the Illinois PTA, was passed prohibiting convicted child sex offenders from approaching children in public parks or buildings.

The Illinois General Assembly passed PA 94-159, which provides that a sex offender, who is a parent, may be in a school or on its grounds for a conference regarding their children. PA 95-440 removed the right of a sex offender to vote in a school building.

**Item 7-g. Support of laws and adequate programs to prevent child abuse and abduction, and to protect the welfare of the abused, missing, and exploited child.**

The Illinois PTA believes that all children are entitled to be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty, exploitation or harm. We support all programs which will protect the children and youth of Illinois from child abuse in any form whether physical, mental, emotional or sexual, either by persons within their family or unknown to them.

The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly adopted a statute providing that reports of suspected child abuse or neglect made to the toll-free number shall be immediately transmitted to the appropriate law enforcement agency. It also provided that a delinquent minor under 15 (rather than 13 may be placed in the guardianship of DCFS when abuse or neglect exists. (PA 95 642.

The General Assembly has continued to expand the list of persons required to make reports under the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.

The DCFS, by law, works to treat child sexual abuse and exploitation and provide intervention services. DCFS provides funds for shelters administrated by non-profit corporations, community based organizations or units of local government. DCFS maintains a Statewide Citizens Committee on Child Abuse and Neglect.

The General Assembly passed legislation requiring schools to teach children how to avoid abduction, requiring schools to inform parents if their child is absent from school, and laws designed to de-traumatize courtrooms for child abuse victims.

In order to attempt to quickly find missing children before further harm can come to them, I-SEARCH coordinates missing children including distributing pictures to schools and the general public. Illinois has an AMBER system, which immediately advises the public and law officials when a child is abducted or is missing, since it has been shown that the first few hours after a child has gone missing are the most crucial in achieving his/her return.

The law allows a child victim to present an impact statement at the hearing of a defendant, and provides protection for unborn and newborn babies of addicted mothers. The law now allows mothers of newborn babies to give up their babies to a local fire or police station or hospital in the hours immediately after their birth, without facing criminal charges.

**Item 7-h. Support of programs and services to prevent and treat psychological and emotional exploitation of children and youth.**

Children and youth are exposed to many forms of mental pressure from forces that may not be in their best interests. Being in the position of having been told to respect authority, a lack of maturity may make it difficult for some youth to recognize and reject improper and dangerous influences.

One form of exploitation may be cult membership. The rise of many cults resulted in some youth being recruited into membership by cult members using forms of mind control. Cults often cause the alienation of youth from their families, resulting in deep emotional scars for all involved.

PTAs/PTSAs are encouraged to hold educational programs to inform families and youth about methods of recruitment and techniques used to exercise control over member's thoughts and actions by cults.

Programs that strengthen the skills children and youth need to handle their problems, that prevent bullying and teach how to handle being bullied, will help children gain self-confidence and avoid exploitation of any kind. The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly adopted statutes to require every school district to develop a policy on bullying, PA 95-349, which they must share with parents, and which allow school districts to add bullying instruction and gang resistance education to their courses of study, PA 95-198.

**8. Services for Children and Youth**

**Item 8-a. Adequate legislative and/or financial support for health, welfare, recreation, and cultural arts services for children and youth.**

The Illinois PTA believes that adequate public health services and public health educational opportunities should be provided for all children and youth. Assistance should especially be given to those communities that are less able to provide these services.

We are concerned for the welfare of all children. We support all legislation that protects children from any harm or inappropriate activities. We have special concern for children whose parents/guardians are unable or unfit to care for them. Many dependent children are the responsibility of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) and/or are wards of the Juvenile Court. These children are often in great need of mental health and other social services.

We support adequate community recreation services provided with public support. We urge that all local taxing agencies dealing with recreation and child services cooperate in the building and use local facilities such as schools no longer in use so as to secure the maximum benefit of the local tax dollars.

We continue to work to support cultural activities that will enable children to appreciate and participate in fine arts.

The success of all public programs for children depends on adequate well-trained personnel and sufficient funds. The best way to sabotage a program is to cut the appropriations for those services. It is a major concern of the Illinois PTA to make sure those budgets are adequate.

The Critical Health Problems and Comprehensive Health Education Acts require health education for all public school students. These Acts continue to lack full implementation due, in part, to inadequately prepared teachers (20 hours of health education course credit needed) and lack of funds.

**Item 8-b. Support of school-community cultural arts activities.**

The Illinois PTA recognizes the importance of cultural arts as a part of a child's total education. Cultural arts are involved in and enhance communication between generations, cultures, and economic levels. They are tools that the PTA continually encourages in the classroom, in the home and in the community.

PTAs can assist the school in seeking out community facilities, such as cultural and art centers, historical societies, and other community resources that could partner with the school to encourage cultural arts activities.

The state now authorizes grants to school boards for comprehensive arts programs in K-12<sup>th</sup> grades.

**Item 8-c. Adequate consideration of the physically handicapped child in the use of, or availability to, public places.**

The law mandates that public buildings be accessible for the handicapped persons. Federal law, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) strengthens the requirements to make all public buildings accessible, and every effort should be made to assure that all activities that include children with physical handicaps accommodate their abilities.

## 9. Environment

### **Item 9-a. Improved legislation that will set and enforce standards and appropriate funds that are adequate to control air, water and noise pollution, and other environmental deterioration within the state.**

Public officials and citizens are concerned about the rising levels of air and water pollution, lead in our drinking water, as well as the presence of radon gas in our schools and the hazards to the health and safety of children and adults that are created by this pollution.

We are concerned about the serious effects of second-hand smoke on the health of children, including in passenger vehicles.

Loud noise is disturbing, and there are grants provided to schools to insulate them from aircraft noise pollution.

The General Assembly passed the Structural Pest Control Act to provide for educational programs on the use of pesticides and to study pesticide use. We support Integrated Pest Management (IPM) programs.

The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has created the Green Cleaning Schools Act that requires the Illinois Green Government Coordinating Council to establish guidelines and specifications for environmentally sensitive cleaning and maintenance products for use in school facilities where that is economically feasible.

### **Item 9-b. Protection, retention, and extension of National and State parks and conservation areas.**

The Illinois PTA is concerned with physical, social, and spiritual values. Recreation and outdoor activities contribute to such values. The Illinois PTA, therefore, believes that parks and conservation areas should be protected, retained and extended.

## 10. Health

### **Item 10-a. Enforcement of immunization laws for all Illinois school children.**

The Illinois PTA believes all children should be properly immunized to protect their health and the health of others.

The law, which applies to all public, private or parochial school students, requires that each child present proof of having immunizations and health examinations in accordance with the law and rules and regulations of the Department of Public Health in each of the following situations: upon entering nursery school; within one year prior to entering kindergarten or first grade; upon entering 5<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grades; and upon transferring to another school, irrespective of grade. Additional health examinations of students may be required when deemed necessary by school authorities. The Illinois PTA also supports mandatory testing for tuberculosis.

Dental examinations are now also required for students entering school as well as before 6<sup>th</sup> grades, final report cards *may* be withheld until proof of examination is presented. Certain exceptions apply.

The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has required an eye examination for all children before entering kindergarten that includes a test for glaucoma and visual acuity.

There is an ongoing discussion regarding girls receiving the HPV (papillomavirus) vaccination, to prevent cervical cancer later in life.

### **Item 10-b. Extension of clinical facilities and services (medical, public health, psychological, and guidance) staffed with qualified personnel.**

The PTA will continue to work for additional adequately staffed, easily available mental health facilities throughout the state.

Only the best-qualified persons should be entrusted with the care and treatment of children, where specialized training is essential. Strong bodies, healthy moral attitudes, and emotional stability are equally important to the welfare of the child and society.

The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly adopted a statute, the School Health Center Act, subject to appropriation, for the Department of Human Services to initiate 20 new school health centers over the next five years.

The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly adopted a statute for the SBE to establish and administer a matching grant program to pay half the costs of training teachers/staff to become qualified cardiopulmonary resuscitation (CPR) and using an automated external defibrillator, unfortunately this is subject to appropriation.

Child guidance clinics are now available at some sites. A mental health team consisting of a psychiatrist, a clinical psychologist, and a psychiatric social worker offers services in the school. This type of service should be extended to every school in the state. Such a program would help parents and teachers understand the child, his problems and his potentialities. Difficulties could be remedied before they become problems. Certainly in our search

for help in the problems of juvenile delinquency, it became apparent that the availability of child guidance clinics should be expanded.

The legislature continues to work to expand and improve services for children through the Department of Children and Family Services, the Department of Human Services, the State Board of Education and Juvenile Courts. Limited fiscal resources continue to keep adequate services from being provided.

**Item 10-c. Support of an increase in the dissemination of information and services pertaining to HIV/AIDS.**

The PTA supports educating students, school personnel, and parents about Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS), and further we urge school boards, in consultation with parents, to review their AIDS policy.

The PTA is concerned that sexually active young people receive adequate and proper information to be able to properly care for themselves to prevent this disease in their teen years. It is very important for young people to receive the information early enough to understand the risk and prevent HIV/AIDS resulting from sexual relations or sharing intravenous needles.

PTA positions state that the “safe sex” philosophy is not completely safe and urges that young people be taught that: 1) the only sure defenses against AIDS are to avoid sexual relations until they are ready to establish a mutually monogamous relationship within the context of marriage, and to refrain from using or injecting illicit drugs; and 2) youth also need to know the facts and the risks of alternative choices. We further promote the research and dissemination of effective programs and curricula that focus on sexual restraint and responsibility.

**Item 10-d. Support of laws establishing adequate treatment and research facilities for narcotics addiction, and the use of hallucinatory agents, alcohol and dangerous drugs among children and youth.**

The rapidly increasing incidence of drug addiction and the social and physiological effects of use of cocaine, crack cocaine, and heroin, as well as, LSD, barbiturates, and other drugs by young people have created great concern among PTA members. We believe it is essential that narcotics addiction, especially among young people, be treated as a curable disease rather than a crime.

Many Illinois students have alcohol/drug related problems; they consume millions of dollars worth of alcohol. Drinking teens are involved in many fatal motor vehicle accidents, and the use of alcohol among elementary students is a growing problem. The State Board of Education funds alcohol/drug abuse programs, which help local districts, plan alcohol/drug education for their students.

Alcohol was added to the definition of “addicted minor,” allowing the court to order treatment for alcohol abuse; made it an offense to serve alcohol to a non-family minor under 18 in your residence (the penalties for this have been increased by the 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly to a Class 4 felony); and provided that monies from the Forfeiture Act be used for juvenile drug abuse treatment.

The General Assembly has reaffirmed its intention to help curb drug and substance abuse with additional mandates for educational programs including driving privilege revocation for minors consuming alcohol of any amount. The Illinois PTA supported this “Zero Tolerance” (of drinking and driving) statute.

## **11. Juvenile Justice**

**Item 11. Adequate programs, on both state and local levels, for the prevention of juvenile delinquency.** (Also, refer to recommendations on the Placement and Care of Children in Substitute Care and the Juvenile Court system in the front of this booklet.)

The Illinois PTA is concerned with obtaining the highest advantage for all children and will support all measures, legislative and otherwise, to establish the principle that delinquency prevention is an important function of youth serving agencies, including schools.

Youth workers, social workers, and welfare workers agree that it is better by far to attack the conditions, which breed delinquency, to identify children who are delinquency prone and institute preventive measures, than to attempt to correct or punish delinquency after it occurs. The benefits of delinquency prevention, not only to the child but also to society as a whole are unquestionable, financially as well as socially. As expensive as prevention may seem to be, it is cheaper than correction.

Parents should be educated to accept their responsibility to eliminate community conditions contributing to the delinquency of children.

Many laws have been passed to affect youth services in order to consolidate youth services funding and provide for a system of more comprehensive and integrated community-based youth services within DCFS. This department provides research, standard setting, monitoring, technical assistance, and grant administration to local boards,

service systems and voluntary organizations working to prevent juvenile delinquency. Grants-in-aids for funding community based youth services are available at the discretion of the Department.

The General Assembly authorized the courts to require a minor to pay court costs as a condition of probation or to be ordered to undergo psychiatric treatment.

In 2007, the General Assembly passed PA 95-337 that causes an adjudicated juvenile convicted of gang activity to be denied driving privileges.

DCFS is required to help coordinate activities with police, probation and parole workers to combat gang crime. "Safe zones" have been created in and around schools providing that crimes relating to gang recruitment or gun possession shall be a felony if committed therein.

Recognizing that truancy can lead to delinquency monies have been appropriated to the State Board of Education to prevent truancy and dropouts and to provide programs to enable dropouts to return to school.

Every city and town in Illinois needs men and women police officers who have had some training in the problems of children and youth, since more children's cases are decided by the police than the Juvenile Court. A child's first "contact with the law" may be a tragic experience or one that will prevent delinquent conduct.

#### **Item 11-b. Adequate programs and services for early intervention for juvenile offenders.**

The Illinois PTA continually works for legislation and funding to provide community programs to intervene with children who come into contact with the police as a result of childish wrongdoing before the child's activities escalate into criminal acts demanding incarceration. In addition, we continue to work to seek programs and funding which will intervene with and treat children who break the law, so as to decrease the need for placing youths in secure detention or in correctional facilities.

As reported by the 1999 Illinois PTA Task Force on Placement and Care of Children in Substitute Care and Juvenile Court System, juvenile offenders too often suffer no consequences at all for a first offense and frequently not even for second or third offenses. Juvenile Court judges complained that these children are "let go" by the police without counseling or any form of remediation in hope they will quit doing wrong.

Progressive remediation and intervention, which does not include incarceration, *must* be required for early offenses, to discourage youth offenders from committing subsequent and possibly more serious offenses. Early intervention for misdemeanors is preferable to later incarceration for more serious offenses.

The 94<sup>th</sup> General Assembly provided for creating a separate Department of Juvenile Justice, which is a giant step toward handling youth who must face the consequences of inappropriate actions or serious violations of the law.

#### **Item 11-c. Adequate treatment and separation of dependent and delinquent children, at both local and state levels, in institutions and in Juvenile Court.**

Ensuring that children coming into the jurisdiction of the Juvenile Court are receiving the best possible care is a continuing concern of the Illinois PTA. Good Juvenile Courts need judges with sympathetic understanding of children and their problems, probation officers trained in social case work, sufficient numbers of well-qualified foster homes, and well-staffed, properly equipped institutions. Support of treatment programs is costly, but we cannot afford the billions of dollars each year that are the current price tag on crime and delinquency.

The action of the 94<sup>th</sup> General Assembly to create a separate Department of Juvenile Justice has fostered a new movement to treat juveniles in a manner that recognizes that youth in the juvenile corrections system need to continue their education, and are able in general to be rehabilitated and returned successfully to society as productive citizens. The new Department is moving toward the "Missouri Model" that sees youth as needing treatment and education in facilities that are more like dormitories or group homes, with personnel trained in social services, and where youth are continually "treated" rather than simply confined and punished for their infractions/crimes.

A pilot process for encouraging counties to use alternative services for first time and non-violent offenders (Redeploy Illinois) is proving successful in reducing recidivism, and saving counties money. In this system counties are provided with funding for the services that divert youth from the juvenile incarceration system.

In the past few sessions of the General Assembly progress has been made in recognizing the value of handling juveniles in the juvenile court, rather than sending juveniles charged with more serious crimes "automatically" to adult court.

The General Assembly in 2007 passed an amendment to the Sex Offender Registration Act that provides changes in the requirements of certain juveniles to register as sex offenders.

The amended Juvenile Court Act provides the following classifications of boys and girls:

**Delinquent minors**-Delinquent juveniles are those younger than 17 who commit an offense that would be criminal if committed by an adult.

**Neglected or abused minors**-Neglected minors are those younger than 18 who do not receive necessary support or are abandoned by their parents or guardians, or whose environments are harmful to their welfare; abused minors those younger than 18 who have been physically and sexually abused.

**Dependent minors**-Dependent minors are those younger than 18 whose parents or guardians are deceased or disabled, or who are without proper care (though not through the fault of the parent or guardian), or whose parents or guardians wish to relinquish all parental control.

**Minor requiring authoritative intervention (MRAI)**- MRAIs are those younger than 18 who have run away or who are beyond the control of their parents or guardians so that their physical safety is in immediate danger. In 1983, MRAI petitions replaced the previous petition category of minors in need of supervision (MINS), allowing for a narrower classification scheme for juvenile problems.

**Truant minors** - Truants are those minors reported by a regional school superintendent (in counties with populations of less than 2 million) to be chronically absent from school, and who have refused all preventive and remedial school and community resources.

**Addicted minors**- Addicted minors are those younger than 18 addicted to alcohol or drugs, as defined under Illinois' Alcoholism and Other Drug Dependency Act.

#### **Item 11-d. Original exclusive jurisdiction over children under age 18, to be in the Juvenile Court.**

The juvenile court movement was considered the beginning of an era in the cooperation of law, science and social work in the field of child welfare.

Present Illinois law establishes the age of a juvenile as a youth under the age of 17 years. There is active support in the General Assembly to raise the juvenile age to a youth's 18<sup>th</sup> birthday. This is the age when many other states consider a person to be an adult. The PTA strongly supports this position.

The PTA believes only a Juvenile Court judge should decide that a juvenile's action is so heinous that he/she should be tried in adult court.

In past years the legislature eroded the practice of trying juveniles in Juvenile Court by constantly expanding the crimes for which juveniles are automatically transferred to Criminal Court to be tried as adults. This practice eliminates these juveniles from the rehabilitative concept upon which the Juvenile Court is based and results in denying them any of the social services available in the juvenile system.

Recently, the legislature has begun to recognize that placing juveniles in adult court for adjudication is not the best public policy, and has begun to reverse this policy, specifically for certain drug related crimes, actions strongly supported by the Illinois PTA.

The PTA has long supported emphasizing retraining and rehabilitation in an effort to help children mature into responsible adults. The 94<sup>th</sup> General Assembly's creation of a separate Department of Juvenile Justice has enabled strides in this direction for the youth in the system.

The PTA has always supported keeping juveniles total separate from adults in locked facilities, even when there is sight and sound separation, including for short periods of time in county jails.

## **12. Safety**

### **Item 12-a. Improvement and enforcement of safety laws, and of highway and traffic laws, to protect children and youth.**

The Illinois PTA is strongly in favor of the Driver Education Program in every high school. Driver Education, since its beginning, has stressed the need for the development of proper attitudes, habits and practices in drivers. Since eight out of ten high school students want to drive, it seems a good investment in human life to teach them to drive properly. The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has adopted much stronger laws related to youth under 19 who are seeking a driver's license and/or who seek to maintain that license. As an example, a student must spend 9 months (instead of 3) driving with a parent or other adult licensed driver, and have at least 50 hours of driving with a licensed adult.

Without completion of an approved drivers education course, drivers must wait until the age of 18 years to receive a driver's license. School districts are allowed to charge a fee for the driving portion of a driver's training to students who can afford to pay.

The 95th Illinois General Assembly passed PA 95-338, which provides that a person under 19, who holds a driving instruction permit or graduated license may not use a wireless phone while driving except to contact a law enforcement agency or health care provider/emergency service. PA 94-239 provides those same drivers may not drive unless all passengers under 18 are properly secured in seat belts/restraints. PA 95 337 denies driving privileges to a juvenile convicted of an offense in furtherance of gang activity.

The Illinois PTA supports strong safety measures for school buses including special identification and equipment, student restraints to include appropriate lap and shoulder systems, safety inspection procedures for buses, retirement of all buses without up-to-date safety features, and stringent requirements for drivers. The law requires 28" seat backs on school buses, with the state picking up the additional costs, and school bus crossing control arms.

The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly adopted a statute to require that school districts shall have a policy to ensure the school bus driver is the last person leaving every school bus, inspecting the interior so that no passenger is left behind.

To encourage good behavior for students on school buses, the 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has approved the use of audio recorders in addition to video cameras on school buses to record any inappropriate actions or comments of students.

The Illinois PTA continues to support the requirement that young children be secured in approved restraint systems whenever they are riding in a car. In Illinois children under the age of 8 must be secured in an appropriate child restraint system, and children weighing more than 40 lbs may be transported in the back seat while wearing only a lap belt if the back seat is not equipped with a lap/shoulder combination belt. There are provisions related to seat belt usage by children to the age of 16.

We also recognize the need for uniform, adequate training for school crossing guards.

Legislation has been passed that permits local communities to lower limits to 20 miles per hour in school zones, provided the zones are so posted. Also, the law provides that all traffic following or approaching a school bus must stop while a school bus is loading or unloading children.

We supported the law that now provides requirements for keeping a dangerous dog, and penalties if the dog causes harm to a person. The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has expanded related parts of the Animal Control Act. .

#### **Item 12-b. Support of comprehensive fire safety and burn injury programs.**

We encourage schools and communities to develop programs for children that will teach them burn injury prevention and emergency treatment, and skills for survival. We encourage programs for fire safety training such as a Survive Alive House, as well as other programs that encompass a variety of fire safety skills.

#### **Item 12-c. Support of laws, services and adequate programs designed to promote the safety and welfare of children in the school buildings and on school grounds.**

It is imperative that children be safe in the public place where they are most often in attendance, schools. Laws addressing in-school violence have predominantly focused on punishment of offenders. Preventive measures better serve children than punitive measures after an incident has occurred.

The Illinois PTA will support and encourage legislation and funding to provide and support prevention programs, equipment, and procedures, including special programs to prevent bullying.

The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has addressed the need to provide for policies about the prevention of bullying which is often cited as causing actions, which can result in students being harmed by other students in retaliation for bullying or because of students having been threatened.

We continue to support the strengthening of the provisions, enforcement, and funding of the Health Life Safety provisions of the School Code that provide monies to improve the safety of school buildings and grounds.

#### **Item 12-d. Support of laws and procedures designed to protect the safety and welfare of children and youth in public amusement places.**

The Illinois PTA supports those laws and procedures that will protect our youth as they avail themselves of the many kinds of public amusement places open to them.

All types of amusement places, such as arcades, carnivals, water parks, and video game parlors, and go-cart tracks, attract children and youth of all ages. Adults should be aware of those attractions and be sure they are well run, with proper regard for safety and adequate supervision. We seek to require minors who use paintball guns to wear safety equipment.

While strictly speaking, computer games, Internet Blogs and personal web pages are not public amusement places in the sense of geography, they are certainly public places in cyberspace. The Illinois strongly supports programs to disseminate information to adults and youth on Internet safety with special attention to the potential dangers and consequences, particularly to children and youth of blogs and personal web pages. The 95<sup>th</sup> General Assembly has adopted a statute allowing schools to adopt an age-appropriate curriculum for Internet safety instruction in all grades.

The law prohibits persons from selling or renting, at retail, video movies which do not have a Motion Picture Association of America rating clearly displayed on them. Parents should review computer games before their children are allowed to play them.

In 2005, the 94<sup>th</sup> General Assembly passed the Violent Video Games law. It requires labeling of video games, and provides that persons who sell or rent any violent or sexually explicit video game to any minor (under 18) commit a Class A misdemeanor.

## LEGISLATION TERMINOLOGY

The terms defined here are words and expressions used in the Illinois PTA legislation program. These definitions have been prepared to help PTA members better understand the terms and acronyms education professionals use when discussing school finance, organization and laws regulating public schools.

**ADA-** Average Daily Attendance. The average daily student attendance for the best three months of the school year used to determine the number of pupils in a school district for computing state aid claims.

**Appropriation-** A sum of money authorized by the general assembly for a specific purpose.

**Assessed Valuation-** Official estimate of property valuation for tax purposes.

**AYP – Adequate Yearly Progress-** In the federal No Child Left Behind statute, the necessary level of proficiency on the state test students must meet to show that the school is on-track to teach all students what they need to know in each school year.

**Bond Issue-** Issue of interest-bearing certificates by a school district to secure funds for school buildings or other capital improvements.

**Categorical Aid-** Money from the State or Federal Government that is allocated to local school districts for special children or special programs.

**Common School Fund-** (State Distributive Fund) (State School Fund) The state fund to which the legislature appropriates an amount, which is sufficient to meet the projected state aid, claims.

**Construction Grant-** A grant of state funds to a district for the purpose of acquisition, development, construction, reconstruction, rehabilitation, improvement, architectural planning and installation of capital facilities consisting of buildings, structures, durable equipment and land for educational purposes.

**Debt Service Grant-** A grant of state funds made to a district to assist the district in making the annual principal and interest payments required to be made on bonds issued by the school district.

**Deficiency Appropriation-Supplemental Appropriation -** An additional appropriation made by the legislature when the original appropriation proves to be insufficient. This may be done by a special session or at the beginning of a regular session.

**Dual District-** Separate elementary and high school districts, each with its own board of education, tax rate and staff, in the same overlapping territory.

**Education Funding Advisory Board (EFAB) -** The legislatively created advisory board that is to advise on the appropriate foundation level for school funding. The recommendation for FY 2008 was \$6,974.

**Entitlement-** A formal approval by the State Board of Education of an application for a grant. Construction Entitlements generally are issued in priority order for funding.

**Equalized Assessed Valuation-** The total value of real property of a district determined by assessment and application of multipliers, which are calculated and assigned by the county board of review and the Illinois Department of Revenue. Theoretically, this system equalizes property assessments throughout the state at 33 1/3 % of fair market value of the property, with the exception with farm property.

**Fiscal Year-** The State of Illinois fiscal year begins July 1, and ends June 30.

**Foundation Level-** A dollar level of financial support per student representing the combined total of State and Local resources available to a school district as a result of the State Aid formula. The foundation level was set at \$5,734 per pupil for the 2007-2008 school year, (fiscal year 2008).

**GRT Gross Receipts Tax-** A tax imposed on all income received by a business without any deductions for costs of doing business, such as a deduction for wages. GRTs are not based on a company's profit, or loss for a given tax year like the current Illinois Corporate income Tax; rather, they are owed on all income, regardless of whether or not the business is profitable.

**Growth-Based Accountability Model-** A system of annual testing that is based on the test results of each individual student's progress from year to year. The present accountability system for deciding if a school has met AYP measures last year's students in a grade with the students in that grade this year.

**Impaction-** The word impaction, when used with reference to education refers to a situation in a school district in which a large number of children in the district are the result of the existence in the district of any large tax-exempt institution or facility.

**Multiplier-** The state department of revenue is required to assure that assessment levels for property throughout the state are pegged at 33 1/3% of the fair market value of that property. To achieve that end, the department is empowered to issue to each county in Illinois a multiplier figure that causes blanket assessment charges necessary to achieve the 33 1/3% target.

**NCLB No Child Left Behind-** The current federal statute governing federal requirements for public schools. Failure of states to agree to implement the law would cause the loss of all federal funds for education in that state.

**Operating Tax Rate-** A school district's total tax rate less the tax rate for bond and interest, rent, vocational education construction, summer school and capital improvement, except that districts may include tax rates extended for payment of bonds for Fire Prevention, Safety, Environmental, and Energy, and working cash at rate of .05% for each purpose of actual tax rate, whichever is less.

**Property Tax-** The tax that is paid by owners of real estate property to local governments, including school districts.

**Qualifying Rate-** The minimum operating tax rate, which must be levied by a local school district in order to qualify for equalization aid in the Resource Equalizer Formula.

**Referendum-** The principle or practice of referring measures proposed or passed by a legislative body to the vote of the electorate for approval or rejection. For example, a school board decides that a new building is needed- the proposition is then put before the voters in the school district during a regularly scheduled election.

**School District-**An area, containing one or more schools, served by a single board of education.

**State Aid Formula-** The mathematical rule, which contains the factors for computing claims against the common school fund, e.g., Resource Equalizer, Alternate Method, and Flat Grant.

**Tax Base-** The total assessed valuation of all real property in a given taxing district, such as a school district.

**Tax Rate-** The percentage figure that is used to determine the amount of tax due from an owner of real property.

**Unit District-** A school district in which there is a single board, administration, and local tax rate for grades 1 to 12.

**Yield, or Tax Yield -** The total amount of taxes which are collected by the application of a given tax rate to a given tax base.

**ADOPTION, AMENDMENT, AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE  
LEGISLATION PLATFORM OF THE ILLINOIS PTA**  
Bylaws of the Illinois PTA

ARTICLE XVIII – LEGISLATION

LEGISLATION PLATFORM OF THE ILLINOIS PTA

Section 1.

The legislation platform shall consist of such preamble, items and sub-items of the legislation policies of the Illinois PTA as have been approved by the annual convention.

The legislation platform shall be a permanent platform, subject to amendment only as hereinafter provided.

Section 2.

Any portion of the legislation platform requested to be opened by a local PTA, region or the state board of managers shall be open for amendment at the annual convention. Copies of proposed amendments received by December 1, shall be sent by the state board of managers to all PTA/TSA unit and council presidents, legislation chairmen and district legislation assistants, and members of the state board of managers at least one (1) month before the annual convention. However, any portion not opened by prior notice may be opened at the annual convention by a majority vote of delegates present and voting.

Section 3.

Convention time shall be made available for action designed to implement the legislation platform of the Illinois PTA.

LEGISLATION ACTION

Section 4.

Legislation action by the Illinois PTA shall be based on the state legislation platform and such items of the legislation program of the National PTA as have been endorsed by the Illinois PTA.

RESOLUTIONS (ed. note. See Illinois PTA Bylaws)

CONTINUING POSITIONS

Section 6.

Continuing positions are established by the legislation policies committee to preserve positions established by resolutions that have been in effect for three (3) years. Continuing positions shall be reviewed annually by the legislation policies committee and shall remain in effect unless dropped by action of that committee. A list will be circulated of those continuing positions, which will be dropped. Their provisions may be reestablished in resolution form by convention action.