

# School tax plans clear House

By **BERNIE SCHOENBURG**  
Pantagraph Springfield bureau

SPRINGFIELD — A property tax designed to fund buildings and maintenance for special education purposes, and limited to eight years, would be allowed on a continuing basis under legislation approved 9-1 yesterday by the Senate Elementary and Secondary Education Committee.

The tax, including the amount now levied by school districts, can yield about \$50 million a year statewide, according to State Board of Education estimates. The estimate includes Chicago, which is not now included in the bill.

The bill, HB 1223, sponsored in the House by Rep. John Matijevich, D-Waukegan, and in the Senate by Sen. Arthur Berman, D-Chicago, would also continue a change made by the Legislature last year to expand allowable uses of the money to any special education program.

The property tax rate allowed under the bill is 4 cents per \$100 assessed valuation for districts that include elementary and secondary education, and 2 cents per \$100

assessed valuation for districts with only elementary or only secondary schools.

With dwindling federal and state money for special education, argued Ron Cardoni, lobbyist for the Illinois Association of School Boards, the property tax measure is "one of the few mechanisms (available) to help schools fund the very, very expensive mandate of special education."

The lone vote against the bill came from Sen. John Maitland Jr., R-Bloomington, who opposed it because it represents a tax increase without referendum. He called it "an attempt to sneak around the voters in a local school district."

The bill became effective in 1970. Elimination of the eight-year limitation is the basic change being sought in the new bill.

Maitland also believes that by the time the Legislature adjourns, the Chicago school system will be included in this bill or similar legislation.

In other action, the committee voted 9-3 to require school boards to appoint advisory committees —

including parents and teachers — on discipline. School boards would also be required to distribute copies of a local discipline code to students and parents within 15 days of the first day of school. Paula Johnson, of the Illinois Education Association, said most school boards already meet proposed HB 687 requirements.

The committee also passed, 9-4, HB 743, which would require that school nurses be paid on the same salary schedule as teachers, including provisions for seniority and advanced training. Local school boards would determine what advanced training would yield higher pay.

The state Board of Education estimates the cost statewide could be more than \$400,000. Local property taxpayers would carry the cost because the bill as passed by the House exempted the measure from the legal requirement that the state pay for new education mandates. Maitland tried unsuccessfully in committee to return that burden to the state.

All three bills have passed the House and now go to the Senate.

## Panel OKs required graduation courses

By BERNIE SCHOENBURG  
Pantagraph Springfield bureau

SPRINGFIELD — Despite predictions from school administrators of damage to students and school budgets, the House Elementary and Secondary Education Committee yesterday approved course requirements for high school graduation.

Donald Gill, state superintendent of education, also told panel members their well-intentioned action was "premature," but SB 669 was sent to the House floor on a 15-1 vote.

Rep. Helen Satterthwaite, D-Champaign, House sponsor of the bill, called Gill's opposition "an interesting exercise," and said the bill would only require schools to "put a basic core program in place."

"We are in Illinois producing students who do not have a good un-

derstanding of science and math," she said. She said students must learn that school "is not just a baby-sitting exercise ... in order to get a high school diploma, they have to put forth some type of effort."

In speaking to the committee, Gill represented a State Board of Education position taken at a meeting Thursday against a list of mandated programs.

"Merely requiring schools to offer courses does not in any way guarantee that we're going to have the kind of excellence in education that we seek," he said. Requirements in three-quarters of the states are more stringent than in Illinois, he said, but performance of Illinois students is equal to or better than that in stricter states.

Thomas L. Erekson, a member of the board of education of Sycamore Unit District 427 and co-

ordinator of the Office for Vocational, Technical and Career Education at Northern Illinois University, said the bill is "really focusing on quantity, not quality." He also said area vocational centers would have to be shut down because students would not have time to follow the specialized programs.

Wayne Sampson, member of the Morton Unit 709 Board of Education, said the plan would "lock in failure" for remedial students.

Robert Bellino, O'Fallon High School principal, said "large numbers of tenured teachers" in special areas such as business, industrial arts and home economics, would face layoffs to make way for math and science teachers who may not be available.

But Mrs. Satterthwaite and Paula Johnson of the Illinois Education Association said the requirements would be variable enough to allow specialized courses of study to continue.

Gill said the state board would propose legislation to standardize how much students are learning in the state's districts next session.

The bill now before the full

House calls for students entering a four-year high school to complete at least three years of language arts, two years of mathematics, two years of science, two years of social studies, and one year of either music, art, foreign language or vocational education.

It would apply to students who will be freshmen in fall 1984.

A bill sponsored by Rep. Peg McDonnell Breslin, HB 1179, contains the same language, except that vocational education is not specified. That bill has passed the House and a Senate committee and awaits action on the Senate floor.

Mrs. Breslin, D-Ottawa, said yesterday she thinks the General Assembly will pass the bills despite the late warnings from the Board of Education.

"The General Assembly and the public are, I think, shocked that the requirements aren't higher and they are displeased with the quality of education."

If the Board of Education makes a proposal for next legislative session, she said, "I think the Assembly will be very interested if and when they come up with something."

## State's 5,000 schools targeted

# Panel favors asbestos cleanup

By **BERNIE SCHOENBURG**  
Springfield bureau chief

SPRINGFIELD — The Illinois Department of Public Health would be charged with ordering removal or encapsulation of asbestos in public and private grade school and high school buildings under a proposal approved yesterday by a Senate committee.

By a 13-0 vote, with one abstention, the Senate Elementary and Secondary Education Committee sent the measure to the Senate floor. There, a debate already has been promised on the issue of including private schools.

The bill, sponsored by Sen. Arthur Berman, D-Evanston, also would increase state bonding authority for schools by \$20 million to pay part of the asbestos cleanup. But neither Berman nor school representatives could say how much the actual cost would be.

"The \$20 million is a guesstimate," Berman said.

As originally introduced, the bill would have required removal of friable asbestos — that which can be crumbled or easily reduced to powder. Asbestos fibers in the air can cause lung ailments including cancer, studies have shown.

However, in working with school groups, Berman has amended his original proposal to allow encapsulation, or painting over, of some asbestos instead of removal of it all. Removing it, he said yesterday, could be a "substantial

burden" on school districts short of money.

In its amended form, the bill would have the Department of Public Health write rules to determine which of the approximately 5,000 school buildings in the state contain health risks, and order appropriate action. An advisory committee with representatives of the department, the Capital Development Board, the Board of Education and the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency, would also be formed. The bill would call for the schools to be cleared of asbestos problems by July 1, 1988.

The Department of Public Health opposed the bill because, according to spokesman Jeff Johnson, "We don't have the people, we don't have the money, to afford all the duties this bill is requiring." But Berman said an appropriations bill would follow later in the session for the department to hire and train necessary staff.

Sen. John Maitland Jr., R-Bloomington, voted for the bill but said he would try to amend it further on the Senate floor. Included will be a move to take private schools out of the proposal.

Paula Johnson, lobbyist for the Illinois Education Association, agreed. "We're not convinced that there are enough dollars to take care of the problem in the public schools," she said.

Sen. Patrick Welch, D-Peru, asked Berman if schools intent on

solving the problem themselves might not wait for state action, resulting in a delay in removing any asbestos threat. Berman said the delay would not be significant with implementation beginning in July, but he could not say if school districts acting on their own could get reimbursement for work done before the state orders removal or encapsulation of the asbestos.

School districts in Central Illinois have dealt with the problem at differing rates. Asbestos has been encapsulated at several McLean and DeWitt county schools.

Berman said he included private schools in his bill because "We are dealing with the health of children," and said yesterday he would not be willing to exempt private schools from the bill "at this time."

## U.S. 51 repairs near Wenona start

WENONA — Repair work on U.S. 51 in the Wenona area is scheduled to begin today, a spokeswoman for the Illinois Department of Transportation said yesterday.

The highway will be patched and resurfaced from a point south of its junction with Illinois 17 to a point north of Wenona.

The work will be done by Vernon Henry Inc. of LaRose on a \$1,249,766 contract.

Work is expected to be completed by August and one-way traffic will be in effect during working hours.



## WHO, WHAT, WHERE

# Girl's wish to meet Clinton comes true

By Jennifer Berger

Most people at Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School Sept. 17 were thrilled just to see the President from afar and hear him speak.

However, in connection with the Illinois Education Association, a school employee union and the Make-A-Wish Foundation, 11-year-old Rachel Reich's dream to meet the president was fulfilled that day.

Rachel, of Homewood, has familial dysautonomia, a disorder of the nervous system. She spent seven months of last year in intensive care at the University of Chicago Hospital.

Rachel's health has already improved so much that she has started to attend her fifth-grade classes part-time.

During her stay at the hospital, a student physician treating Reich established a relationship with her family and told them about the Make-A-Wish Foundation.

After learning about the American government in third grade, Rachel immediately knew the nature of her wish.

Without any word of the possibility of meeting the President, Rachel decided to wish for something more tangible and realistic. She wished for a laptop computer, which she received.

However, before it was public knowledge that President Clinton would be visiting the area, Sandy Reich, Rachel's mother, received a phone call from her friend, Troy Potthoff. His wife, Christine Lyman of the Illinois Education Association, was involved with arranging Clinton's visit.

Potthoff thought "of Rachel's wish as soon as he heard Clinton would be visiting the South Suburbs."

Paula Johnson Purdue, an IEA lobbyist had secured the meeting with the President, but Sandy did not tell her daughter the news until they were in the car on their way to the high school.

Although Rachel was surprised and nervous when she first heard the news, she was quickly excited as she sat with her mother, father, brother, and her nurse in the crowd.

"It was magical," said Sandy. "There was such a communal spirit there."

Halfway through the President's speech, a Secret Service agent signaled to the Reich family that they would be speaking with the President after his speech.

"It was very covert. It was awe-



Star photo by Warren Skalski

President Bill Clinton kisses the hand of 11-year-old Rachel Reich during his visit to Homewood-Flossmoor Community High School Sept. 17. Rachel, who suffers from familial dysautonomia, a disorder of the nervous system, had her wish to meet the presi-

dent granted when friends of her mother's who work with the Illinois Education Association helped make it happen. Rachel is joined by her mother, Sandy, her father, Keith, her brother, Alex, and her nurse, Mary O'Looney.

some," says Sandy. The family was led out of the crowd to wait for the President behind the platform, while he finished his speech and shook hands with people in the crowd.

Sandy, Rachel, Alex, her 8-year-old brother, Keith, her father, and Rachel's nurse, Mary O'Looney waited with great anticipation.

"I felt special," says Rachel. "It was cool. No one else was there."

President Clinton walked over to the family and got down close to the ground so he could talk to Rachel, who was sitting in a wheelchair.

The President kissed Rachel's

hand, put his arms around her and told her how glad he was that she came here to hear him speak. He stayed with her for awhile, asking her questions and talking. He said, "I am so proud of you. Keep fighting and be brave."

President Clinton told Rachel he would like for her to come visit the White House so that he can show her around.

Sandy looked at him with tears in her eyes and said, "God bless you for doing this."

"I knew he really heard me," she added.

Lyman of IEA said, "It was very genuine. We were the most

impressed that he took the time to talk with Rachel. His full attention was there for her."

Sandy spoke of how the experience made a huge impact on Rachel's affect. "A joie-de-vivre returned that had been absent for a while." Rachel had been dealing with much physical pain.

"I looked at my husband, Keith and said, 'She's back.'"

Although the visit to the White House depends on Rachel's improving condition, it remains a goal towards which the family will reach.

It was pretty exciting," said Rachel. "He's a nice man."