



Erie County Association of School Boards

Vol. 2; Issue 3 November 2022

ADVOCACY ALLIANCE MONTHLY  
YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE

Dear Members,

The Bills lost to the Jets. I almost never watch the Bills, and when I do, it seems as though they always lose. I apologize now, and promise that if they make it to the "big game," I will only go to the parties for the food & socialization. I will avoid the commercials so as not to inadvertently see a play and ruin the outcome of the game.

There is so much happening in the next few weeks. By the time you read this, elections will be over and I will be knee deep in revising the Legislative Handbook. There is a legislative team meeting next week and the Legislative Breakfast takes place on November 19th at the Grapevine Banquets in Depew. We are going to have a great turn out. I am really looking forward to seeing everyone there.

Our local weather has provided us with several summer like days! This past week I was driving to my local high school with the convertible roof down, enjoying the sun and warm weather while radio station 102.5 played Christmas music. For a second I forgot what the date on the calendar was.

And if you are like me, maybe you are hoping to be 1.9 Billion dollars richer by the end of the week.

Here's hoping!

Best Wishes,

Jane

Have a bill we should watch? Tell us with this [Advocacy Alert Google Form](#).

Important Dates

- ⇒ Next Legislative Team Meeting, Nov. 17th, 6:30 p.m. - 8:30 p.m.
- ⇒ Legislative Breakfast 2022 will be held on November 19th at the Grapevine Banquets, 333 Dick Road in Depew.
- ⇒ Speed boarding, Dec. 1– See your ECASB This Week for details.
- ⇒ ECASB Award nominations open in January. Start thinking about people you should be nominating from your Board of Education. Visit <https://www.ecasb.org/awards-1> for details about the awards and nomination forms.

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# time to talk

## Advocacy Spotlight:

Erik Polkowski is Dedicated to Advocacy

Attending the NYSSBA conference a few weeks ago, I was amused by a man standing near the door inside the convention center. Clearly he had charm and personality; you would have to when wearing tiger slippers! Then I looked up and saw it was my friend Erik Polkowski. Erik truly supports the Akron CSD and the Akron Tigers. Erik is the vice president of the Akron Central School District Board of Education and the district's Legislative Team Representative. Erik serves on the presentation team for the Legislative Breakfast along with Scott Johnston and Kathleen Chiavetta.

It didn't take Erik long to convince my fellow board member Heather Jacobs (Iroquois) and I to walk over to the Marriot and attend a session on student activism with him. Somewhere in there, *I convinced him* to answer a few questions about his passion for advocacy.

Erik has served on his board for four years, and was drawn to service when his children were in school during the years of the GAP elimination. He was concerned by the number of programs and teachers being cut and the poor reallocation of resources. He wanted to "make a positive change and be on top of working with legislators to best handle what our schools needed."

Erik is an engineer and project manager for a steel supplier, as well as a small business owner. He serves on the Town of Newstead Planning Board, focusing on construction. This year, he has decided to become a field hockey official, so watch for him on your field hockey fields!

He likes building relationships with legislators. Developing a positive relationship and dialoguing with legislators are the keys to successful advocacy. He expresses, "knowing you have those avenues open because you have established those relationships makes it [advocacy] worthwhile."

Erik likes the ECASB roundtables and forums, and the setup of the ECASB Legislative Team. Meeting as a group allows for open dialogue about what is going on in your district and how that crosses over and correlates with other districts. He believes, "as a collective group, we can become a larger voice and unit for positive change."

"The hardest thing [when meeting with legislators] is sometimes officials are disingenuous with their comments," Erik remarks when thinking about a time when an official met with a group of Legislative Reps to tout a plan the legislator thought would be great and well received and was instead met with the voices of concern. It was clear the legislator hadn't thought the legislation through from the point of view of school districts.

Today, Erik sees one of the biggest needs in legislation is about the teacher shortage in New York State. He likes that *Senator Rath* is attempting to create the next generation of teachers. *Senator Rath* proposed Bill S0507, an act for a rural school teaching incentive program. Erik admits a bias, as one of his children plans to teach in a rural school and this will help pay off college debt, but he isn't alone. This bill is one the Legislative Team will bring up at the Legislative Breakfast as one example of bills legislators can support to help offset the teacher shortage.

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If Erik had five minutes alone with Governor Hochul, he would first thank her for her dedication to fully funding public schools; however, he also sees this as short term fix. He would want to open the door to further dialogue about long term fixes to address teacher shortages, electric bus mandates, and bus driver shortages as just a few of the issues facing schools.

Erik's advice for board members interested in getting involved with advocacy is "jump in... Volunteer for as many things as possible. Participate in as many events as possible. Try to get a bearing for what it [advocacy] is." Try to identify a couple of areas to focus on that are very important to your district or would help your district."

Reaching out, creating, and building relationships with legislators is so important. Erik asserts, "Its all about the relationships. Just a quick letter, an email, or a phone call that let's them know you're out there. When you have developed a relationship, it makes it a lot easier to make the call when you have an ask, and the legislator knows your name, knows who you are and sees you as a point of contact." He adds, that the relationship is give and take: "hopefully they [legislators] can talk to you freely about what is it you see and hear that is necessary and vice versa.

Anyone who has heard Erik speak about advocacy knows he is knowledgeable about what his district needs and what is happening at the legislative level. He was involved with the district before he was elected to the Board of Education. Be involved. That's the first part," he says. The second part involves watching, reading, and seeing how things may impact you. You have to have a fully encapsulated understanding of the situation on both sides because you can't argue for one viewpoint and not understand the other side that may counter your claim. Erik, of course, uses BillTrack50 for some of his research. He will also search through newspapers, news sources, and information that he learns in the community. Knowing and understanding how a bill moves through the process and within committees and the legislative floor is helpful.

He adds, "that it is okay to communicate with legislators even if the legislator is *not* your legislator," As an advocate, you can call your local Assembly Members and ask for them to support the Senate efforts by introducing the companion bill in the Assembly and vice versa. Without the bill in both, houses a bill is a moot point. Erik maintains, "that the Albany trip and the Legislative Breakfast are a chance to talk and make those connections and requests with legislators.

Erik's final bit of advice: "Do your homework. Its what you had to do in school and it's what you have to do now! The more you put into advocacy,...the more rewarding it will be. You'll find your focus and passion. Your passion will become your legacy."



**Erik Polkowski and Jane Sullivan take time for a selfie at NYSS-BA Convention, October 27, 2022 at a session that was held at the Marriott Syracuse in the ballroom.**

# BILL ALERT



*ECASB uses Bill Track 50 for our bill tracking and advocacy needs. If you also have an interest in tracking bills, email Jane at [JSullivan@e1b.org](mailto:JSullivan@e1b.org); she will set you up with an account umbrellaed under the ECASB Bill Track 50 subscription. A basic training session was held on Sept. 29 and has been recorded. If you would like to view the video, please email Jane.*

## **A Bill Track 50 update:**

**The program will leave the New York State session open and not mark it as over on December 31, 2022. Bills that have not come to an end will be left showing as in committee. The data has been updated and the bills will look correct if you look at the bill page. All bills will be considered dead as of January 1, 2023 and the program will begin to again update as bills are introduced in the new legislative session. Hence, there will be no new alerts until January, 2023, unless an emergency session is scheduled between now and then.**

## Redistricting and the Election:

What you need to know

At the time of writing this month's Advocacy Alliance Monthly, the elections have not been completed, other than early voting. Even though you are reading this post election, the results are not included in the newsletter. We will be discussing the results at the Legislative Breakfast on November 19th. The new Legislative Handbook will be published soon after on the ECASB website.

BallotPedia.com informs readers that, "The day that state legislators are sworn into and assume office after they are elected varies from state-to-state. In 34 states, legislators who are elected in November don't assume office until the following year, while in 16 states, legislators assume office before December 31st of the year in which they were elected." In New York State, newly elected and re-elected legislators are sworn into office and assume the position on January 1, 2023. The Legislative Session begins on January 4, 2023 and ends on June 16, 2023, with a prefile date of November 15, 2023. Not knowing what the prefile date really means, I reached out to Amanda Wyzykiewicz, Legislative Director for *Assemblywoman Monica Wallace* to learn more.

This year the election cycle did bring some fairly big changes to Erie County and our representation in Albany. The state district boundaries were redrawn and the new boundaries have affected our leadership. Likewise, all the districts have election races.

Once upon a time, we had six Senators representing our ECASB school districts. Over time, that has been scaled back to 4 Senators. District 57 represents just one ECASB school district (Gowanda); District 60 represents 16 school districts and both Erie1 BOCES and Erie2CC BOCES; District 61 represents six school districts; and District 63 represents six school districts.

District 57 is a race between incumbent George Borrello and challenger Daniel Brown. District 60 is Senator Patrick Gallivan, who is running for re-election, unopposed. District 61 is a race between Senator Sean Ryan and Senator Edward Rath III. Both these senators have been elected officials repre-

senting Erie County schools in the past. District 63 is a race between incumbent *Tim Kennedy* and challenger *Faye Pietrak*.

On the Assembly side, District 139, affects one school district and is a race between incumbent *Steven Hawley* and challenger *Jennifer Keys*. District 140 is a race between incumbent *William Conrad* and challenger *Scott Marciszewski*, affecting two school districts. District 141 is *Crystal Peoples-Stokes*' district and she is running unopposed. District 142 is a race between incumbent *Patrick Burke* and challenger *Sandy Magnano*, affecting three school districts and Erie 1 BOCES. District 143 is a race between incumbent *Monica Wallace* and challenger *Frank Smierciak II*, affecting six school districts. District 144 is *Michael Norris*' district and he is unopposed. It represents two school districts within ECASB. District 145 is a race between incumbent *Angelo Morinello* and challenger *Douglas Mooradian*, affecting one school district. District 146 is a race between incumbent *Karen McMahon* and challenger *Katerina Zepowitz*, affecting three school districts. District 147 is represented by *David DiPietro* who will retain his seat, affecting seven school districts and Erie<sub>2</sub>CC BOCES. District 148 is represented by *Joseph Giglio* who will also retain his seat, affecting one school district. District 149 is a race between incumbent *Jonathan Rivera* and challenger *Ralph Hernandez*, affecting three school districts. And finally, District 150 is a race between *Andrew Goodell* and *Sandra Lewis*, but we no longer have a school district in this district with the new lines.

As previously stated, the new Legislative Handbook will be published after the election. It will contain all updated information.

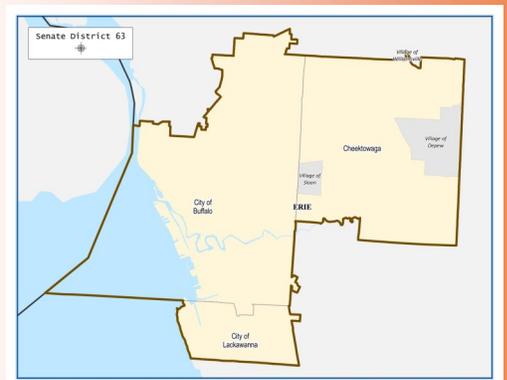
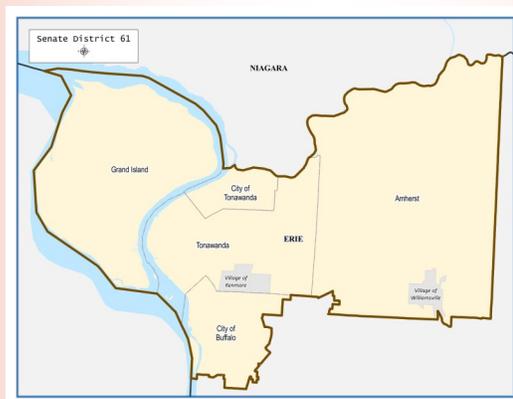
Also new this year, the Buffalo Public School Board of Education elections will be held with the general election. Running for the Central seat is **Paulette Woods**. Running for the East seat is **Kathy Evans-Brown**. Running for the Ferry seat is **Sharon Belton-Cottman**. Running for the North seat is **Cindi McEachon**. Running for the Park seat is **Theresa Drillig-Schuta**. Running for the West seat, the only race with more than one candidate, are **Mustafa Abdo**, **Jennifer Mecozi** and **Le'Candice Durham**.

Finally Governor *Kathy Hochul* and Lieutenant Governor *Antonio Delgado* are facing off with challengers *Lee Zeldin* for governor and *Alison Esposito* for lieutenant governor.

**Senate Seats**



Pictured from top to bottom: Senator Patrick Gullivan, Senator Sean Ryan, Senator Edward Rath, and Senator Tim Kennedy. All of these candidates are incumbents. All are running for election on November 8. Candidate not pictured: Faye Pietrak.





## Dinner With Rick Timbs

Message Remains Largely unchanged

Rick Timbs, the executive director of Statewide School Financial Consortium (SSFC), once again visited with ECASB members to help us understand the budget process and where each district stands in the new era of “fully funded” education. Over 50 people were in attendance at the Rick Timbs Dinner held at Creekside Banquets on October 6.

Timbs message remains largely unchanged, as he reported out the long range fiscal analysis of the federal and state aid packages. Many schools are in a good position financially this year because of the influx of federal and state aid. He continues to caution decision makers about how they use these funds. Should a district use much of it as supplementing the budget rather than supplanting it, districts may find themselves having to cut teachers and programs when the funding ends.

He also talks about how districts have been set up by the state comptroller. The comptroller is proclaiming that school districts have too much money and that they most likely overloaded their budgets to get that money. In addition, by 2024, all schools in New York State will be considered safe-harmless. Then what? Well, if there isn't a new foundation aid formula in place, things might get complicated. Then again, with a new formula in place, it is likely to be complicated anyway. The problem, Timbs argues, is that the formula is based on enrollment and no matter how you look at it, enrollment in our area is decreasing in most districts. A change in the formula is not likely to take enrollment out of the equation, so losing kids isn't going to bode well for most districts in Erie County. Add to this dilemma, as enrollment is decreasing, the cost per student is on the rise because schools are become all things to all students. “it used to be kids walked to school if they lived a mile away and the school offered two or three sports. Now, safety is a concern and kids ride the bus even when they live next to the school. Schools offer numerous clubs and sports for students to participate in.” Schools are no longer just academic centers; they are now social institutions.

In the end, he articulates what our legislative asks must include: Equity, Adequacy, Predictability, and Sustainability. Legislators must ensure a more equitable distribution of funds, and the adequacy of the funds within the formula should be “based on the actual cost of education for each school district that allows it to achieve their educational mission, under the obligations and regulations.”

