



Erie County Association of School Boards

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ADVOCACY ALLIANCE MONTHLY
YOUR MONTHLY UPDATE

Dear Members,

We are in the midst of the changing weather and gorgeous fall foliage. I was able to take a trip to Brooklyn to see my oldest daughter this past weekend. It was the perfect time to drive across the state, as the leaves were in the peak of changing.

The trip gave me plenty of time to reflect on the changes we need to continue to strive for in the legislation. With the Legislative Breakfast just six weeks away, I am in the stages of planning, writing invitations to the legislators, and working with a sub-committee from the Legislative Team to create the PowerPoint presentation for the event.

The wonderful part of the event this year is that we can once again invite EVERYONE from ECASB back to the breakfast table! This is a great chance for those interested in advocacy, who are not serving as the district Legislative Team Representative or Alternate, to learn more about advocacy and what you can do first hand. I do hope many of you will join us. The event is sure to be informative, collaborative and enjoyable.

I am eagerly awaiting the opening of the next Legislative session and can't wait to begin planning our advocacy trip to Albany in February.

Lastly, I hope to see you at the NYSSBA Convention at a seminar, on the exhibit floor or at a sponsor happy hour at the end of the month.

All my best,
Jane

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

Important Dates

- ⇒ Next Legislative Team Meeting, Oct. 20, 6:30-8:30 in A1
- ⇒ Tonight! Rick Timbs, Oct. 13, at Creekside. Registration is at 5:30 p.m.
- ⇒ NYSSBA Virtual Business Meeting, Oct. 17.
- ⇒ NYSSBA Convention in Syracuse, Oct. 27-29
- ⇒ Mark your calendar for Dinner with Dave Little, Nov. 3. Watch your ECASB Variety for details.
- ⇒ Mark your calendars; the 2022 Legislative Breakfast will be held on November 19th at the Grapevine Banquets, 333 Dick Road in Depew.

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time to talk

Advocacy Spotlight:

Our Fearless Co-Leader of the Legislative Team

On a beautiful autumn morning, what better way to spend some time at a table with a friend and a cup of Tim Horton's coffee (double cream, double sugar of course)? I had that exact pleasure on Oct. 4, when I was invited to visit with Scott Johnson (Sweet Home CSD), the co-chair of the Legislative Team.

Scott has been a member of the Sweet Home CSD Board of Education for 17 years. He is up for re-election this year and proudly announces he will run again. He is committed to the district's DEI Committee and feels he has more work to do.

When he first ran for election, he lost by an extremely small margin; however, shortly after the election, a Board Member moved out of the district and Scott was appointed to the seat. That's not surprising, as he was active in the district's PTO and the Comprehensive District Education Planning committee. He was encouraged to run for the Board by many people within the district.

Once on the Board, it did not take long for Scott to find his way to the ECASB Legislative Team and his advocacy role. It seems a natural fit for him, given that as early as 12 years old, he can remember his parents participating in fundraising for John LaFalce's campaign.

Scott credits Mike Morrow and Dirk Rabenold for mentoring him on his road to becoming an advocate for public schools. The 20 year board members were the first people to take Scott to Albany to visit with legislators. He also recognizes Jane Burzynski for realizing his skill set and appointing him to the lead role on the Legislative Team. It is a role he has held for more than 10 years.

Scott described his most positive advocacy moment, and surprisingly it is not time spent with a legislator! A few years ago, legislation was passed to allow district employees time off during the workday to vote. This was going to disrupt school days for districts across WNY. Scott and several others, including several superintendents, ECASB Legislative Team members met with the editorial board of the Buffalo News. Explaining what this new legislation would mean to a school district, they were able to convince the Editors to write

about the issue and ultimately the law was rescinded as a result.

Scott feels strongly about bringing more voices to advocacy efforts. Anyone can become involved. He does have a bit of advice for those new to advocacy: "Always remember to look at it as long-term [commitment]. Government wheels turn slowly." He confirms this is especially true when there is a financial aspect to legislation, and there's almost always a financial concern. Scott suggests that those who want to be involved should arrange to attend a Legislative Team meeting with your school Legislative Team Representative. Ask lots of questions and contact ECASB. There are lots of people willing to mentor new advocates!

He encourages everyone to visit with legislators. If you are uncertain about what to say, go with those who have advocated before and listen to them and learn. "It doesn't matter what your political affiliation is," Scott adds. He explains that political affiliation is less important when it comes to school advocacy. He often finds himself on the same side as those affiliated with another party.

Currently, the big issues Scott still foresees in advocacy are making sure legislators address the final piece of foundation aid and fixing the formula. This isn't an easy fix, and a lot of that has to do with everyone having a different definition of what is fair. But as a school board member, one must remember this is by far the largest chunk of the school budget income with the most amount of flexibility in how it is used.

The other issue that he says needs dedicated advocacy is the Childhood Victims Act Funding. Too many school districts are struggling with old records, and after due diligence, are still left without insurance information. Settling lawsuits will cost thousands of dollars districts cannot spare in current budgets. Legislators need to understand the financial impact can wipe out entire increases with just one claim, and many districts have several claims.

Scott has one last bit of advice for anyone wondering if they still belong on a school board and wonder why they are doing this job. "If you are down, go see the kids. It will remind you why you [serve on a board] and what is really important."

Our 2022-2023 Silver Sponsors



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; 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.

During the Bill Track 50 Training on September 29, Jane and Bill Track 50's Patsy Ashmore discovered a glitch of sorts in the program. After some investigation from the Bill Track 50 Team, it was discovered that most of the "bills" introduced between now and the session start in January will not really go anywhere. They are more like pre-files that would get re-introduced for the 2023 session. That is *unless*, NYS were to go into a special session, in which case the bill would appear in the same session data.

This does present a bit of a conundrum for Bill Track 50 about how to treat these bills until the new legislative session begins. There's likely more to come in this situation as Bill Track 50 communicates with NYS. We will keep you posted! For now, if you see a bill pop up, it means someone will likely try to reintroduce it in the new legislative session in January.

Bill A10653 was introduced and sent to the Education Committee on Aug. 12. It Relates to school districts evaluating capital improvement projects for such school districts in the state for: compliance with the New York state climate leadership and community protection act, upgrading heating, ventilation or air conditioning to be more energy efficient, including, but not limited to upgrading to an active solar heating system; installing solar panels or other sources of alternative energy; improving broadband accessibility and reliability; upgrading technology so that it is more resistant to security risks; structural improvements, including, but not limited to windows, roofs, foundations and walls; purchasing hybrid or electric school buses; and upgrading plumbing and electrical systems. There are no local sponsors; It is sponsored by Jo Anne Simon (D), Jeffrey Dinowitz (D), Sandy Galef (D), and Richard Gottfried (D). Read the official bill at <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/A10653>.

Bill A04407 was introduced in 2021 and was sent to committee in January of 2022. It did not move further, but recently a change in sponsorship has triggered a notification, so it is likely being looked at for being brought forward in the next legislative cycle. It relates to expanding access to advanced courses to improve educational equity beginning with notification to parents and students on the benefits and opportunities offered as well as automatic enrollment opportunities. There are many sponsors including local legislator Crystal Peoples-Stokes (D). Read more about the original bill at <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/A4407>.

Bill A04775 also was introduced in 2021 and was sent to committee in January of 2022. Like the previous bill, it did not move further, but recently a change in sponsorship has triggered a notification, so it also is likely being looked at for being brought forward in the next legislative cycle. It relates to allowing school districts to permit home-schooled students to participate in district interscholastic sports. There are many sponsors including local legislators Stephen Hawley (R), Joseph Giglio (R), Andrew Goodell (R), Karen McMahan (D), Angelo Morinello (R), and Crystal Peoples-Stokes (D). Read more about the original bill at <https://www.nysenate.gov/legislation/bills/2021/A4775>.