



ILLINOIS FEDERATION OF TEACHERS
Department of Political Activities

2025 Legislative Review

Pensions:

The IFT and We Are One (WAO) negotiated [SB 1937 \(Martwick/Kifowit\)](#) that directly addresses the Tier 2 shortcomings for public employees by:

- Improving the final average salary calculation
- Lowering the retirement age
- Improving the cost-of-living adjustment
- Increasing the Social Security Wage base to address the "Safe Harbor" problem.

While the bill didn't pass, IFT is committed to rectifying the unfair Tier 2 pension benefit during the fall veto session and/or next spring. This fight is far from over!

IFT Legislative Wins Last Session:

Making student growth permissive in teacher evaluation

[SB 28](#) (Lightford/Faver Dias) is an IFT initiative that makes student growth permissive rather than a mandatory factor in rating teacher performance, provided there is agreement through the local Performance Evaluation Reform Act (PERA) joint committee. The bill was signed into law as PA 104-20.

Adding transparency to state assessment decision-making

[HB 2574](#) (Scherer/Guzman), another IFT initiative, will require ISBE to post on its website information about assessment contracts, costs, and timelines and mandate ISBE to work with stakeholders when making assessment decisions. The bill is pending the governor's signature.

Examining Librarians and Libraries in Higher Education

[SJR 13](#) (Halpin/Chung) – an IFT/UPI initiative. The resolution creates the University Library and Professional Librarian Access and Transparency Task Force to examine the current state of libraries on Illinois public university campuses and present recommendations to ensure that public academic libraries and the educational services provided by librarians remain viable and benefit Illinois students.

FY26 Budget Brief

Each year, the Illinois General Assembly passes a budget that funds schools, universities, and public services. The FY26 budget saw slight increases in several places, but mainly was flat-funded around public services. It totaled \$55.1 billion. Highlights include:

- **Evidence-Based Funding (EBF)** will receive \$307 million in FY26
- **Teacher Vacancy Grant program** is funded at \$30 million for FY26.
- **Teacher Mentoring/Virtual Instructional Coach (VIC)/We Care program** is funded at \$5 million.
- **Higher education funding** will see a modest 3% increase, with a caveat: 1% will be appropriated immediately to public universities, and the remaining 2% will be allocated after the governor's written approval. The budget also included an additional \$9 million for community colleges.
- Pensions were again fully funded for FY26, along with the CIP and Teachers' Retirement Insurance Program (TRIP).

Looking Ahead to 2026

The legislature is scheduled to return for veto session on October 14–16 and October 28–30.

As we look ahead to 2026, we plan to continue our efforts to address Tier 2 pensions, advocate for increased funding for public schools and higher education institutions that our students deserve, and review new legislation related to Artificial Intelligence. Additional items for our legislative agenda will be based on resolutions passed at the IFT convention in October.