



Board of Education Column

By Robin Nelson, Board of Education

Governmental Affairs Committee Update: 69th Legislative Session

As the 2025 North Dakota Legislative Assembly approaches the end of its regular session, the pace has accelerated to finalize key legislation. With 72 of the 80 allotted days complete – and a few days likely reserved for potential interim needs – adjournment could happen at any moment.

The Fargo Board of Education's Governmental Affairs Committee has been actively engaged throughout the session, closely monitoring major policy proposals, funding decisions, and property tax reform efforts. Here's a brief overview of the more critical issues we have tracked and advocated this year.

Policy

- **Vouchers and Education Savings Accounts:** Our committee consistently opposed the use of public funds for private education. While multiple voucher and ESA bills were introduced, two proposals ultimately advanced. One was vetoed by the Governor—with the veto sustained—and the other was decisively defeated. Although public funding was preserved this session, similar proposals are anticipated to resurface in future sessions.
- **Cell Phones in Schools:** A bell-to-bell cell phone restriction is imminent in North Dakota schools. SB2354 remains active and, if enacted, will be implemented by the 2025-26 academic year to support student focus, mental health, and academic performance.

Funding

The Committee advocated for adequate per-pupil funding as well as increased support for Special Education and English Language Learner services, areas that remain historically underfunded.

The most current funding legislation includes a 3% per-pupil increase each year of the biennium. However, no additional increases were included for SPED or ELL categories.

Our committee also supported universal free school meals. While full universal access was not achieved, additional funding was included in one of the other pending bills, expanding eligibility to more students.

Property Tax Relief and Reform

Recognizing the strong public demand for property tax relief, the Legislature is finalizing



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measures that involve both additional state funding and new limitations on local taxing authorities. Under the most current bill versions, local political subdivisions would be limited to a 3% annual budget increase without voter approval.

Importantly, any future excess mill levy or building bond elections must now be held during a primary or general election, and excess operating levies will be limited to a four-year duration. These changes will directly impact Fargo Public Schools, as our current voter-approved excess mill levy is set to expire soon, and we are actively analyzing our updated Long-Range Facility Plan process.

Conclusion

Thank you for your continued attention and support as we work to navigate these important changes affecting public education and our broader community.

