

ECASB Legislative Wrap-Up Breakfast May 2, 2026

Advocacy Update



Scott Johnson serves on the Sweet Home CSD Board of Education. He serves as the NYSSBA Area 1 Resolutions Chair and is one of the co-chairs of the ECASB Legislative Committee. Below are Scott's notes from the recent ECASB Legislative Wrap-Up Breakfast.

Senator Gallivan:

He started with an explanation of the budget process. The Governor submits their budget to the Legislature in January. Both houses work on their own versions of the budget, and come up with the "one house budgets" The Governor will also include policy items in the budget which get debated by the Legislature. Once the one house bills are done and policy pieces are done, the leaders of the Senate and Assembly work with the Governor to finalize the budget for voting. This is all supposed to be completed by April 1st under the law.

Under Governor Cuomo he stressed, there were "timely budgets" which meant either an on time budget or as close to the date as possible. He had each agency compartmentalized and they submitted their requests to the Governor's office. His policy pieces were still debated, but he generally pushed it through without additions or many changes. That was his way of trying to meet the deadline for the rest of the stakeholders that relied on the New York state budget such as school districts.

Under Governor Hochul, she submits the budget and some policy items in January, but then adds more throughout the legislative session. More people are involved in each area. The money portions seem to wait until the policy sections are worked out. The deadline is not as big of a concern for Governor Hochul as it was under Cuomo administration.

The Governor believes we will get the budget completed this week (week of May 3rd). The Senator said he expects to have a minimum of a 2% increase for all school districts in the foundation aid formula. He also expects full-funding for all expense driven based aids.

Finally, the Zero Emission Buses have been the number one issue for most school districts this year. He supports local control on this issue.

Assemblyman Conrad:

The budget process has been very frustrating for him this year. The members of the Legislature have not been paid since March. The timelines in the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act, in particular for Zero

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Emission Buses is not realistic. The Governor knows it, and there are changes being discussed. The auto insurance issue is a form of a tort reform. None of her predecessors, either Democrat or Republican, have ever attempted to attack this issue.

"Hold harmless" for school aid is a big concern for the Assembly. The Special Education Reserve Fund is also on the agenda. This is an area being pushed by all the groups involved in education including ECASB and NYSSBA. He expects some relief on the Zero Emission Bus timeline, along with some money to assist those already using them.

Beyond the budget they are working on Teacher Recruitment Bills, specifically Bill A03668. There is no movement on Tier 6 reform as this is a very costly venture for the state. NYSUT is pushing hard for reform. Assemblyman Conrad is expecting about another week to complete policy bills and one last week to complete the money items before the budget is complete.

Below are the questions submitted at the breakfast. The first four were answered before we ran out of time. The other four questions will be sent to Patrick Gallivan and Bill Conrad for answers. Look for their answers in an upcoming edition of ECASB's Advocacy Alliance Monthly. The questions were answered by both Senator Gallivan and Assemblyman Conrad.

Question: With budgets being late on a regular basis, is there any talk or consideration of expanding the legislative calendar in the first three months of the year?

Answers:

- *There has been limited discussion, but it hasn't gone far yet.*

Question: What do we (ECASB Members) need to do to help achieve our mutual goals?

- *Jokingly, Senator Gallivan said "yell and scream". Seriously they said advocate, advocate, advocate. Send messages. Visit them in their local offices and Albany if possible. Get others in your community to help. If different organizations can agree on a specific issue and all groups get behind a push, that will help the issue rise to the top. Advocacy cannot be a one time shot. Board Members should be contacting their legislators constantly.*

Question: Has there been any talk or consideration of opening aid for transportation provided by private organizations that provide buses to districts? Maybe with guard rails to prevent concerns such as fraud to help move it to passage in the Assembly and Senate?

- *This was the first time legislators have heard this type of request. A follow up from the question writer mentioned increasing costs for contracted transportation after they move to ZEB's. There seemed to be some confusion as to the requirement for private companies to move in that direction. (We need to get the right answer for this and share with our people and the representatives).*

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Question: How are you increasing accountability for Charter Schools? What about same year reimbursement of tuition for our public school cash flow?

- *There has been some discussion, but no resolution at this point. No details provided.*

Questions that will be sent to the legislators include the following:

- *Is there any update on UPK funding? Will funding be based on 2026-2027 enrollment? Any restrictions on how new funding can be used?*
- *Does Governor Hochul get a paycheck when the budget isn't on time? (the answer was yes) .*
- *What can school boards do to force consequences when budgets are late?*
- *How do you feel about "local control" when it comes to mandates? Allowing for at least a process to argue against certain things.*
- *Has there been any movement in adjusting the \$100,000 Capital Outlay? How about the Special Education Reserve?*

Have additional questions for your legislators? Please contact them and ask them!