



NEWS

From the Illinois Senate

State Senator Dave Koehler

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Koehler legislation to allow school districts more flexibility to use state funds to build schools

SPRINGFIELD – State Senator Dave Koehler (D-Peoria) has passed a bill in the Illinois State Senate to allow school districts across the state the flexibility needed to finance the building of schools through local Public Building Commissions.

Senate Bill 2071 allows school districts across the state more options when it comes to the use of state money through the local Public Building Commission to build schools. According to current state law, this opportunity exists only in Cook County.

“I feel if this is good enough for Cook County and the City of Chicago, it is good enough for the rest of Illinois. We need greater opportunities, especially in places like the City of Peoria, where we have four schools over 100 years old that need to be replaced. By using funds through the Public Building Commission, we can build new schools and provide the right environment to educate our students and prepare them for the global economy,” Senator Koehler said.

The legislation would also provide for greater flexibility in using life safety bonds that would help school districts by requiring the portion of the new building paid for by bonds to not exceed the cost of buildings or additions being replaced. This would help a district that wanted to consolidate two old schools into one new school. For example, two gyms, two cafeterias, and two auditoriums would not be needed, so the total square footage would be less than that of the two schools. A district could then use the cost savings from building smaller square footage to make other updates, such as adding air conditioning for the new school, thereby providing a more comfortable learning environment for the students.

“District 150 serves about 14,700 students. Fourteen of its buildings were constructed prior to 1929. With this legislation, we would have the opportunity to use funds not available to us prior to this bill to help our children get a step up in this fast paced world,” Senator Koehler said.

The bill passed with bi-partisan support and now goes to the Illinois House of Representatives for consideration.

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