



School Administrators Alliance

Representing the Interests of Wisconsin School Children

TO: Senate Committee on Education
FROM: John Forester, Executive Director
DATE: December 19, 2017
RE: SB 427 – Notification of Certain Construction Activities in School Buildings

The School Administrators Alliance (SAA) is opposed to Senate Bill 427, relating to notification of certain construction activities in school buildings.

The bill requires a school board to notify parents, staff, and members of the community at least two months prior to starting a school construction project with an estimated cost of \$10,000 or greater that will occur in a school building in which pupils and school employees will be present. With exceptions for emergency situations, the school board must provide notice at least two months prior to the start date.

In anticipation of this hearing, I sought input on SB 427 from selected school superintendents and school business officials. I'd like to share with you some of their thoughts on the bill.

First, as a general rule, school districts try to avoid scheduling school construction projects during the school year out of concern for student and staff health/safety as well as the teaching and learning environment. But schools have very narrow windows in which to complete construction projects when students and staff are not present. And, sometimes, the scheduling of contractors and subcontractors can prove challenging.

Second, several administrators noted that \$10,000 is a low threshold. Today, a relatively simple project, such as replacing a “bank of doors” would exceed that amount. One school business manager from a district of about 2,000 students estimated that they complete about 25 projects of that size or larger annually.

Third, there is concern that the two months notice requirement for relatively small projects could become problematic. For example, all construction projects must be approved by the school board and boards would typically approve the summer facility improvement plan in about February. However, these priorities can change later in the Spring based on changing student/staff needs or school safety concerns. Also, depending on contractor availability, projects originally designed for completion during summer break can carry into the beginning of the next school year. Would this type of situation leave school districts in violation of the two months notice requirement?

Finally, I would just like to clarify one item in the bill. Although the LRB analysis does not indicate it, it appears that the required notice to members of the community can be met with a post on the school district's Internet site. Is that correct?

Thank you for your consideration of our views. If you should have any questions on our thoughts on SB 427, please call me at 608-242-1370.