

March 2026

Dear Readers of the *Extra Mile*:

As we write this, snow is in our forecast. Nonetheless, March brings hints (more in the southern than northern parts of our state) of spring. It also brings the Big Ten basketball tournament at the United Center, NCAA basketball tournaments, and, somewhat surprisingly, Major League Baseball's opening day.

Of course, a much-welcomed spring break is also on the agenda. Wherever your break travels take you, we wish you a fun and relaxing time before the end-of-the-school-year rush.

### **Save the Date for *The Year in Review* Conferences!**

We are pleased to announce the dates and locations for our 2026 *The Year in Review* conferences in conjunction with our partners at IASPA. Notably, after maxing out our conference space in Peoria and to better serve school leaders across central Illinois, we are pleased to offer the 2026 *Year in Review* in Bloomington. Here is the 2026 lineup. Be sure to mark your calendars now:

- **October 6 - Bloomington (Bloomington-Normal Marriott)**
- **October 13 - Collinsville (Doubletree by Hilton)**
- **October 29 - Itasca (Westin Chicago Northwest)**

When registration opens in the fall, make your reservation early. *Space is limited in all three locations.*

### **Student Handbook Checklist**

Spring will soon arrive, and with it, the need for schools to review their student handbooks. Hodges Loizzi has fully revised and updated its *Student Handbook Checklist* for 2026, and it is now available for purchase through [this order form](#).

Student handbooks have become a source of litigation for many school districts, so ensure yours is complete and up-to-date to avoid litigation and limit your legal costs. ***Order your checklist today!***

If you wish to have a complete review of your student handbook, contact any of our Student/Special Education Practice Group attorneys.

## U.S. Supreme Court Grants Emergency Relief for Parents in Transgender Student Rights Case

In our January issue, we reported on the California case of *Mirabelli v. Olson*, in which a federal trial court judge enjoined California from enforcing its statute and policy regarding parental notification concerning transgender students.

In February, we reported that the Ninth Circuit "stayed" the trial court's order, finding it legally deficient in multiple respects. As we noted at the time, the parents planned to seek emergency relief in the U.S. Supreme Court.

Proving that courts can act quickly (when they want to, as our founding partner **Stanley Eisenhammer** found out when he won a civil rights students case in the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1980s), on March 2, the Supreme Court issued an emergency order (by a 6-3 vote) reinstating the trial court's order favoring the parents.

As a result, the trial court's order will remain in effect as the case proceeds.

In the same vein, the Office for Civil Rights has reportedly opened an investigation of a Wisconsin School District over its transgender student policies.

***The rights of transgender students raise a host of complex student and personnel issues. Contact any of our Student or Personnel Practice Group attorneys with your inquiries.***

### ***Mahmoud v. Taylor Settlement Update***

As noted in a prior issue, *Mahmoud* involved the Supreme Court's consideration of parents' efforts to "opt out" of certain school curriculum on the grounds that the instruction infringed upon their First Amendment rights.

*K12 Dive* reports that the parties in *Mahmoud* have settled for **1.5 million dollars**. Even more significant, the district reportedly agreed in the settlement to remain under court jurisdiction to enforce the settlement. The settlement underscores the high risks of civil rights litigation for school districts.

## HODGES LOIZZI DEVELOPMENTS

### **Managing Partner**

We are pleased to announce that **Jason Manning** will succeed **James Levi** as the firm's managing partner, effective July 1. Jason will be only the fourth managing partner in the firm's history, following founding partners **Bob Kohn** and **Stanley Eisenhammer**.

We welcome Jason and deeply thank James for his leadership, especially during the trying days of COVID. James will return to full-time practice in our



Jason Manning



James Levi



Bob Kohn



Stanley Eisenhammer

## Special Ed Connection

Partner [Michelle Todd](#) was recently quoted in LRP's *Special Ed Connection*. The article discussed the issues involved when parents refuse to provide school staff with releases to contact the parents' medical providers. Such information is often critical for the IEP team to consider. Your special education administrators can look forward to hearing from Michelle at the upcoming IAASE *Spring Legal Series*.

## The Tokyo Marathon

We are also pleased to announce that our colleague [Valerie Robert](#) competed in the 2026 Tokyo Marathon, finishing in a remarkable 3 hours, 37 minutes, and 21 seconds. Our congratulations to Val on her achievement.

Val is well on her way to her goal of completing the "Abbott World Marathon Majors." Along with Tokyo, Val has run the Chicago, New York, and Berlin marathons, and has only Boston, London, and Sydney remaining.



## Consumer Price Index

The Bureau of Labor Statistics yesterday released its February 2026 CPI data. Inflation was running at the annual rate of 2.4%, in line with expectations. The full BLS report can be accessed below.

## In This Issue

Where does a public school district's obligation to transport private school students begin and end? The Illinois Supreme Court agrees to hear an appeal brought by East St. Louis School District No. 189.

Can an Illinois school district terminate staff who refused to take the COVID-19 vaccine during the pandemic? Our Seventh Circuit decides.

What can happen when a public body objects to an extensive FOIA request in court? A metro-east county recently learned the answer when the Illinois appellate court addressed the matter.

Can school administrators be sued individually for alleged violations of IDEA? A New York federal court answers.

## LEGAL NEWS

### Illinois Supreme Court to Rule on Public School Transportation to Private Schools

The Illinois Supreme Court has agreed to decide a school district's responsibility under Section 29-4 of the *School Code* to provide transportation to nonpublic school students. The court agreed to hear an appeal from a metro-east school district after the appellate court ruled that qualifying private-school students must be treated the same as public-school students for busing purposes.



**Michelle Todd**

The school board argues that this interpretation is incorrect and conflicts with prior precedent, contending that the law only requires transportation to the nearest points on existing public-school routes, not full door-to-school service for nonpublic students.

The Supreme Court's ultimate decision could have major implications for school transportation and related costs. [Read more...](#)



## Seventh Circuit Upholds Illinois Schools' COVID-19 Vaccinate-or-Test Mandate

The Seventh Circuit recently upheld the dismissal of three Illinois school employees (two public school employees and one private school employee) under Title VII and the *Emergency Use Authorization Act*.

The court found that the plaintiffs failed to identify any religious belief that conflicted with weekly testing and instead relied only on personal or moral objections, which are not protected under Title VII.

The court also emphasized that employers are not required to grant accommodations that would force them to violate state law, and exempting employees from both vaccination and testing would have required schools to disregard Governor Pritzker's COVID-19 Executive Order. [Read more...](#)



[Jeff Goelitz](#)



## Trial Court Erred in Appointing "Special Master" to Review Records in FOIA Dispute

A FOIA requester filed suit to challenge a failure of a metro-east county to comply with a FOIA request.

The trial court, rather than ruling on the requester's complaint, ordered the requester to hire and pay for a "special master" appointed by the court to review the records in question. The requester refused to pay, and their complaint was dismissed.

The requester appealed, and the appellate court reversed the trial court, remanding the matter to



[Kerry Pipal](#)

the trial court to determine if the county properly alleged that the request was unduly burdensome.

The case emphasizes the critical role school district legal counsel plays in responding to extensive or complex FOIA requests. Contact any of our Corporate Practice Group attorneys with your FOIA inquiries. [Read more...](#)



## School Administrators May Be Sued in Their Individual Capacities For Alleged Violations of IDEA

A New York federal trial court has ruled that school administrators may be sued in their individual capacities and exposed to compensatory and punitive damages for alleged violation of a student's IDEA rights. [Read More...](#)



[Jessica Nguyen](#)

## INSIGHTS FOR SCHOOL LEADERS

### IAASE Spring Legal Series

[Michelle Todd](#) and [Jessica Nguyen](#) will be presenting on March 24 at the IAASE *Spring Legal Series*. Please register [HERE](#) for a fun and informative experience. The duo will also present at an IAASE Zoom Conference on isolated time-out and physical restraint.



### IASBO 2026 Annual Conference

[Jeff Goelitz](#) will share his expertise and experience on "*Preparing for Contract Negotiations: Strategies, Market Data, and Current Trends*" at the IASBO 2026 Annual Conference.

[Steve Richart](#) will also be presenting and sharing his knowledge on "*Outsourcing and Contracting for Hard-to-Fill Positions: Legal Pitfalls.*"

[Registration](#) is now open!



### AASPA 88th Annual Conference

As you get your "Boots On" at [AASPA's 88th Annual Conference](#), don't miss [Barb Erickson's](#) session on "*FMLA & ADA and What You Should and Shouldn't Say.*" She'll break down the communication do's and don'ts every school administrator needs to know to protect employees, support compliance, and lead from the ground up.

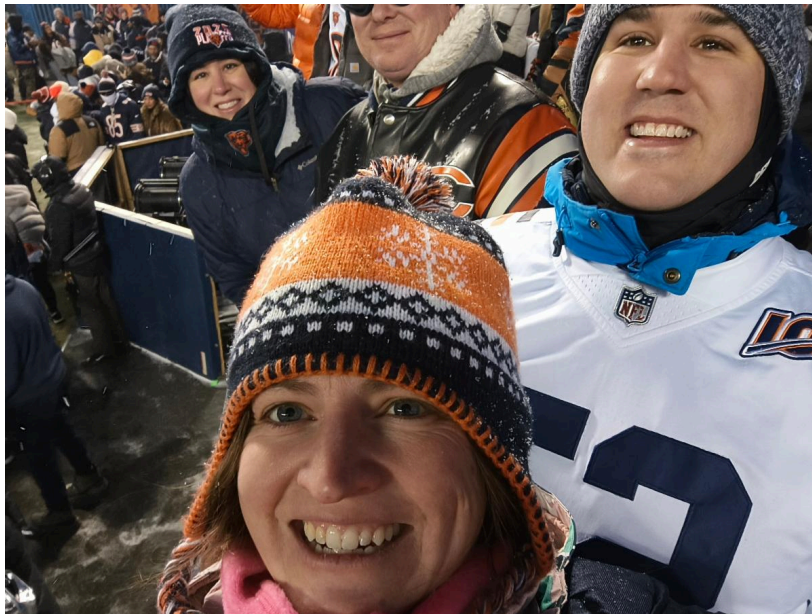
## NOTES AND REMINDERS

- Remember to complete and give Principal and Assistant Principal reclassification notices by April 1.
- As spring approaches, check contracts for auto-renewal provisions. School district contracts often renew on July 1, with required termination notice deadlines as early as 120 days prior. Don't get stuck in a contract you don't intend to! Contact [James Levi](#) or [Kerry Pipal](#) to review renewal provisions or prepare non-renewal notices.
- If you are considering entering into a finance lease for technology, school buses, or other equipment, contact [Heather Brickman](#) or [Kerry Pipal](#) to discuss. Financing companies often require opinions of counsel that can be most efficiently provided if we are involved prior to Board approval.

## CONCLUSION

### The Chicago Bears

At the *Extra Mile*, we are always quick to admit our mistakes. In our last issue, we highlighted Michelle and Kerry, who braved the cold to support the Bears in their playoff game. We failed to include our partner [Pam Simaga](#) (pictured below).



### The Fighting Illini

Our Fighting Illini are in the Big Ten Tournament (along with the highly ranked Cornhuskers) and will be in the upcoming NCAA tournament with hopes of reaching the Final Four. All our Illinois grads are enjoying the run.

### Our Viewing Recommendations

Ryan Murphy has been responsible for multiple series over the years, including *Love Story: John F. Kennedy Jr and Carolyn Bessette*, which we are currently enjoying. But we highly recommend another one of his series, which just completed its first season on FX and Hulu: *The Beauty*. Partly an episode of the *X-Files*, partly, well...more, the series looks at the impact of a drug/virus that makes people beautiful, and Ashton Kutcher's performance is remarkable.

We note also that *Paradise* has returned for season 2 on Hulu. If you haven't seen season one, please do, you'll enjoy it. Season 1, Episode 7, is one of the best episodes of anything ever on television. More on season 2 in our next issue.

We truly hope you enjoy your spring break, and we look forward to helping you meet the challenges the end of the school year will inevitably bring. Thanks for reading the *Extra Mile*: Your gateway to the stability, service, and excellence of Hodges Loizzi.

We will write to you again in April.

**The Attorneys and Support Staff of  
Hodges, Loizzi, Eisenhammer, Rodick & Kohn**

## CONSUMER PRICE INDEX Latest figures: [February 2026](#)

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