



# OVER THE BACK FENCE

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*Please duplicate and send to members in your district.*

*"Pursuing Excellence in Small and Rural Schools"*

## AIRSS WILL BE IN CHICAGO

The Association of Illinois Rural and Small Schools will have a booth at the Triple I Conference in Chicago. Please bring your board members and stop by booth 710 and register for a chance to win an AIRSS ladies or men's watch. A school district could win a free membership for the 2009 school year.

## ETHICS ACT

Administrators should remind board members that all gifts from an exhibitor to the school officials and/or board members should be valued at less than \$100 per calendar year.

## NREA WRITING CONTESTS

The deadline to submit entries for the 2008 NREA Essay Contest is February 4, 2008. The writing prompt for the NREA Essay Contest will be: "How My Rural School Will Change in the Next Twenty-Five Years".

Prizes for the elementary division (grades 3 through 5) will be \$250 for 1<sup>st</sup> and \$100 for the Runner-up; Middle School (grades 6 through 8) winners will receive \$400 for 1<sup>st</sup> and \$200 for the Runner-up; and the same amount will be awarded the winners and runner-up at the High School division (grades 9 through 12). This is a good way to recognize those talented individuals in your schools. Visit the NREA website <[www.nrea.net](http://www.nrea.net)> to find detailed information. Go to EVENTS and Essay Contest.

## DID YOU KNOW?

How many rural high schools in the U.S. enroll 100 or fewer students in grades 9 – 12? According to the August issue of Rural Policy Matters, more than 1500 rural schools. The issue also said that 12 states educate more than half of all rural students. The twelve states, in rank order of rural students are: TX, NC, GA, CA, OH, PA, MI, NY, FL, TN, AL, and VA. Statistics are for the 2005 school year. Source:NCES.

## NEW SCHOOL BUS REGULATIONS

Here are some new rules that go into effect this January 1, 2008.

Public Act 95-0105, effective January 1, allows the owner of a car accused of passing a stopped school bus to identify the driver – if it wasn't him – who committed the offense. If he fails to name the guilty party, his registration is suspended for three months.

Public Act 95-0176, effective January 1, requires each school bus to display a telephone number on the rear to be used to report erratic driving. School districts and contractors must have a policy in place to investigate reports of erratic driving and to report actions taken.

Public Act 95-0260 requires school districts and contractors to have policies in place by January 1 that requires drivers to shut off the ignition at the end of the day, activate the interior lights and walk to the rear of the bus to check for any children still on board. If an electronic device is used, that device must activate the interior lights when the ignition is shut off.

Public Act 95-0319 allows the strobe light on a school bus to be illuminated at any time a bus is being used as a school bus and is carrying one or more pupils.

Public Act 95-0352 allows visual and audio recording to be made inside a school bus being used for school related activity. Notice of recordings will have to be provided to parents and students, and posted on the entrance door and inside the school bus. Recordings must be kept confidential and can only be used by school officials and law enforcement for school bus-related disciplinary actions or prosecutions. Source SSNS.

## HOUSE TO CONVENE IN NOVEMBER

The Illinois House of Representatives will apparently convene on Thursday, Friday and Monday (November 1, 2, & 5) to avert a mass transit crisis in the Chicago area. There are no committee hearings scheduled. Still no budget yet.