

District 99 superintendent among those pushing lawmakers for state budget

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As the state lumbers toward the dubious distinction of going two full years without a budget, 405 school superintendents – representing 1.4 million students – have signed onto an initiative to push lawmakers and the governor to pass a budget, including Community High School District 99 in Downers Grove.

Called “Pass Illinois’ Budget!,” the grassroots initiative also urges lawmakers and the governor to improve the state’s education funding formula and to pay school districts millions owed in unpaid bills this year, officials said.

The state has not had a budget for two years because of a stalemate be-

tween Gov. Bruce Rauner and the Democrat-controlled General Assembly.

The superintendents who started the movement include Jeff Craig of West Aurora School District 129, Tony Sanders of Elgin School District U-46, Karen Sullivan of Indian Prairie School District 204 – a DuPage County district that serves Aurora, Naperville and other towns – and Jennifer Garrison of Sandoval School District 501 in downstate Marion County.

“It’s just four of us rounding up the troops,” Craig said. “We contacted superintendents through email, texts and phone calls. We have 405 superintendents now, but the number keeps growing.”

Illinois has 862 school districts.

District 99’s Henry Thiele is one

of the districts who have signed on, alongside others in the area including Community Unit School District 200 in Wheaton, Elmhurst School District 205, Barrington Community Unit School District 220, Berwyn South and North school districts, Morton High School District 201 in Berwyn, Glen Ellyn School District 41, Joliet Township High School, Joliet Public Schools District 86, Salt Creek School District 48 in Villa Park and West Chicago Elementary District 33.

The superintendents are relying on every form of communication available – from tagging lawmakers on Twitter with #PassILBudget, asking officials and constituents to call or email their lawmakers, and asking districts to use their marquees to urge for a budget.