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ATTORNEY GENERAL  
STATE OF ILLINOIS  
SPRINGFIELD



**November 22, 1976**

**FILE NO. S-1179**

**COMPENSATION:  
Per Diem For State  
Board of Education  
Meeting Days**

**Joseph M. Cronin  
State Superintendent of Education  
State Board of Education  
100 North First Street  
Springfield, Illinois 62777**

**Dear Mr. Cronin:**

This is in response to your letter concerning section 1A-2 of The School Code (Ill. Rev. Stat. 1975, ch. 122, par. 1A-2) which authorizes a member of the State Board of Education to claim a \$50 per diem for "meeting days". You ask whether this statutory provision includes formal meetings of subsidiary bodies of the Board, such as standing committee meetings and public hearings. It is my opinion that section 1A-2 does include such meetings.

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Section 1A-2 provides in pertinent part:

" \* \* \* Members shall be reimbursed for all ordinary and necessary expenses incurred in performing their duties as members of the Board. Expenses shall be approved by the Board and be consistent with the laws, policies, and requirements of the State of Illinois regarding such expenditures, plus any member may include in his claim for expenses \$50 per day for meeting days."

Accordingly, a board member may claim reimbursement for his ordinary and necessary expenses incurred through his attendance at committee meetings and public hearings conducted by less than all of the board members. The use of the peculiar and unqualified term "meeting days" as a basis for the \$50 per diem claim makes it somewhat unclear whether a member may include such a claim for meetings other than regular meetings of the entire Board. It is therefore necessary to determine the meaning of the term "meeting days".

The words in a statute are to be taken in their ordinary meaning in general and popular use, unless a different meaning was intended, and such meaning must be accepted unless clearly wrong. (Walgreen Co. v. Murphy, 386 Ill. 32.) The General Assembly has not provided a specific definition of the term "meeting days" for purposes of the statute. Black's Law Dictionary, Revised 4th Edition, defines the word "meeting" as:

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"MEETING: A coming together of persons; an assembly. Particularly, in law, an assembling of a number of persons for the purpose of discussing and acting upon some matter or matters in which they have a common interest."

Therefore, because a formal committee meeting or a public hearing is an assembly of board members for the purpose of discussing and acting upon some matter in which they have a common interest, it is fair and reasonable to conclude that the term "meeting days" includes days on which such committee meetings or public hearings are held in formal session.

No contrary meaning can be clearly discerned from the pertinent language of the Code. Indeed, the above conclusion is supported by language contained in section 1A-4(D) of the Code. (Ill. Rev. Stat. 1975, ch. 122, par. 1A-4(D)) This section establishes a joint standing committee composed of members of the State Board of Education and the Board of Higher Education. This section explicitly provides that: "All meetings of this committee shall be official meetings for reimbursement under this Act." Thus, where the General Assembly has specifically considered and addressed itself to the compensation of a committee which aids the State Board of

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Education in its functions, it has determined that the \$50 per diem is applicable.

Finally, pursuant to section 1A-4(C) of the Code (Ill. Rev. Stat. 1975, ch. 122, par. 1A-4(C)), the State Board of Education is charged with such duties as setting educational policies for various types of schools, analyzing present and future needs of education in the State, and recommending appropriate legislation. Because these duties all require a large degree of investigation and deliberation, the aid of standing committees and public hearings is particularly appropriate in the Board's performance of these duties. The General Assembly must have realized and contemplated that such subsidiary bodies would be necessary and would be utilized by the Board. At the same time the General Assembly chose not to expressly limit the term "meeting days" to regular meetings of the entire Board.

For the foregoing reasons, I conclude that the term "meeting days" in section 1A-2 of The School Code includes formal meetings of subsidiary bodies of the State Board of Education. Consequently, board members who attend such meetings may claim the \$50 per diem for "meeting days" as provided in

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section 1A-2. Of course, it is also provided in section 1-A2 that such claims remain subject to approval by the Board, and that they must otherwise be consistent with the laws, policies and requirements of the State relative to such expenditures.

Very truly yours,

A T T O R N E Y   G E N E R A L