



STATE REPRESENTATIVE
GARY HEBL
46TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
January 20, 2017

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When Talking Education, Actions Should Match Rhetoric

By Rep. Gary Hebl

In his State of the State address earlier this month, Governor Walker pledged to increase public school funding and stated that quality education is a main factor when trying to grow the economy of the state. I agree with the Governor on this aspect, although his actions thus far have not supported his rhetoric.

It seems fairly obvious that over his tenure, education has not been a top priority for the Governor. Indeed, last session alone the University of Wisconsin System budget was cut by \$250 million. Along the way, for the first time in 44 years, UW has lost its top-five ranking among best research Universities in the country.

Nationwide, Wisconsin is in the top five for the percentage of graduates with student loan debt. Wisconsin residents are aching for debt relief. The best solution that Governor Walker can come up with is “call a bank.” Democrats in the legislature have been trying to help- over the past several years, we have been trying to set up a state authority focused on helping borrowers refinance their loans so that they can more effectively get out of student debt. One of the best ways to grow the economy is to have university graduates spending their disposable income on in-state services. If a significant portion of their monthly paycheck is going to their substantial student loan debt, our economy will continue to stagnate.

Technical schools have seen cuts almost as large as the UW system. State aid has been slashed for tech schools by more than \$200 million. There is also currently a waitlist for tech students that already qualify for aid to actually receive it. In addition, the most recent Republican budget did not fully fund need-based financial aid for students, nor did it aid veterans looking to attend school because it underfunded Wisconsin’s GI Bill.

Our children in K-12 school may be the hardest hit, losing \$1 billion in state aid. Meanwhile, last year Wisconsin’s average ACT dropped below the national average. If a well-educated workforce is key to spurring economic growth, Governor Walker’s leadership is proving insufficient.

As a new member of the Assembly Committee on Education as well as the Assembly Committee on Colleges & Universities, I look forward to discussing these issues with my Assembly colleagues. I remain committed to working for necessary funding to ensure that Wisconsin’s students are ready to enter the workforce and strengthen our state’s economy.

Rep. Gary Hebl represents the 46th Assembly District, which includes the cities of Sun Prairie and Stoughton, the village of Cottage Grove, and the townships of Cottage Grove, Dunkirk, Pleasant Springs, and Sun Prairie.

Contact Rep. Hebl with any questions or concerns you may have at (608) 266-7678 or via email at Rep.Hebl@legis.wi.gov.

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