



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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VOUCHER LOBBYISTS RESPOND TO SHORTCHANGING PUBLIC STUDENTS

Special Interests say Property Taxpayers Should Make Up the Difference

In the last several days, defenders of special interest giveaways have responded to the news that the state is shirking its responsibility to support public education off onto property taxpayers by arguing that... the state is shirking its responsibilities off onto property taxpayers.

“What’s the difference between \$7700-\$8400 handed to the voucher industry and an average of \$6700 for public school students?,” Rep. Gordon Hintz (D-Oshkosh) asked. “The voucher industry has made their answer clear this week: property taxes.”

Four special interest lobby groups funded by voucher dollars issued a release that cited **“the combination of state equalized aid and property taxes”** as an excuse for the legislature spending 16%-26% less per student on average for public schools than they do for voucher schools http://www.thewheelerreport.com/wheeler_docs/files/0320scw_02.pdf

“Wisconsin taxpayers have been on the hook since the GOP started hijacking state aid intended for public school students and handing it to the special interest voucher lobbyists,” said Sen. Jon Erpenbach (D-Middleton). “Republicans have decided to leave it up to responsible school boards across the state to fill the hole the GOP created by handing the voucher organizations more per student.”

One of the chairs of the Legislature’s budget-writing committee decried the revelation that the GOP was taking funding out of public schools and handing it to voucher schools by complaining that state funding details were **“... completely neglecting the funding that comes from our state’s property taxes.”** http://www.thewheelerreport.com/wheeler_docs/files/0322nygren.pdf

“It **IS** time to stop neglecting property taxpayers and start living up to our responsibilities as state legislators,” said Rep. Sondy Pope (D-Mount Horeb). “The simple fact is that we have a constitutional responsibility in the **statehouse** for **state** funding of public education, and my GOP colleagues have chosen to hand voucher operators much more per student than public school students, and the voucher industry says it’s up to property taxpayers to fill the gap.”

A memo released by Legislative Democrats Monday showed that, even after highly touted yet marginal increases to state funding for 850,000+ public school students and the families, voucher school operators will be handed \$1000-\$1700 more per student than public school students will receive on average from the GOP. At the same time, general aid – which has been raided since 2015 to pay for the statewide voucher program -- will be less than 2010 levels once diversions to vouchers and independent charters are made.

“The simple fact is voucher operators are going to get at least \$1000 more per student under this budget -- and voucher industry lobbyists say the only way to make up the difference is property taxes,” said Sen. Janet Bewley (D-Delta). “Voucher supporters are apparently content to admit that siphoning state dollars out of public schools to pay for voucher schools means more property taxes.”