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WISCONSIN STATE REPRESENTATIVE

41<sup>ST</sup> ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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## **Continuing to Make Education Funding a State Priority**

As a former first grade teacher, I recognize first-hand the importance of providing adequate funding for our education system. Schools are where our future generations learn the foundations of success to become lifetime learners; an investment in our children today leads to future success of our state.

On May 23<sup>rd</sup>, the Joint Committee on Finance (JFC) reaffirmed this belief by voting to increase K-12 funding by more than \$500 million over the next biennium. This will bring the state back to two-thirds funding for the first time since former Governor Doyle eliminated that commitment and results in the most state spending for K-12 schools in state history.

Rural districts like mine have their own unique concerns, and I am happy to see the creation of a new categorical aid program to ensure that every school district regardless of zip code or property value will see at least an increase of \$1,000 in state aid per student. In addition, this budget would increase funding by \$2 million for the rural school teacher pilot program which will help address teacher shortages in areas like Marquette and Adams counties.

Additionally, as the chair of the Speaker's Task Force on Suicide Prevention, I was glad to see JFC double the current funding for student mental health programs as well as money put aside for the Center for Suicide Awareness's Hopeline. The task force on suicide prevention will be putting forward policy recommendations this fall and our next hearing on June 17<sup>th</sup> at Ripon College will have a unique focus on youth suicide.

This pro-kid budget ensures that our priorities for our kids and schools can be met without increasing the tax burden on Wisconsin families.

As always, I encourage all residents of the 41<sup>st</sup> Assembly District to share their thoughts on any state issues. Follow the 41<sup>st</sup> Assembly District by liking the Wisconsin State Representative Joan Ballweg Facebook page ([www.facebook.com/WIRepBallweg](http://www.facebook.com/WIRepBallweg)). I look forward to working with you and my colleagues on both sides of the aisle in the Assembly and the Senate to develop a budget that is sustainable, balanced, responsible and keeps Wisconsin moving in the right direction.

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