



WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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Assembly Republicans Unveil Education Budget Package

Members Call for More Funding to Classrooms, Limiting School Referendum Buy-downs

Madison...Assembly Republicans unveiled their education proposal that would give K-12 schools a record amount of funding and more money to the classroom over the budget recommendations from Governor Walker. The plan targets state aid to low-spending districts to address funding inequities and reduces property taxes. The Legislative Fiscal Bureau says the package lowers property taxes from today's levels and reduces them to below 2010 levels. The proposal also limits the expensive and unsustainable practice of buying-down school referenda.

“The state can no longer afford to pay every nickel and dime of a school referendum passed locally,” said Speaker Vos. “Why do state taxpayers pay for local decisions? That undermines the local control philosophy that conservatives universally support.”

Since 2011, the state of Wisconsin has used sales and income tax dollars to cover the increases to property taxes that voters approved by referendum. Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance reported that 40 percent of all state taxes and fees last year went to reduce property taxes, the largest portion going to K-12 schools. The practice of the state offsetting referenda has added up since 2011. According to the Legislative Fiscal Bureau, approximately \$434 million went to buy down property taxes due to approved school referenda and new construction costs.

The Assembly Republican education plan puts over \$100 million more in the school funding formula and provides a significant increase in per pupil funding with \$150 per pupil in the first budget year and \$200 per pupil in the second year. The proposal also targets aid to frugal, low-spending school districts.

“Our plan helps fix the inequities that we’re seeing among schools that our 24-year-old school funding formula isn’t addressing,” said Rep. John Nygren (R-Marinette), the Assembly chair of the Joint Finance Committee and co-author of the education plan. “While we welcome an increase in per pupil spending, we’re bound by our constitution and our constituents to provide fair and equitable funding to all students regardless of where they live in Wisconsin.”

The Assembly Republican education plan helps Wisconsin rural schools by fully funding sparsity aid and high-cost transportation aid. It also makes reforms to free up resources to be redirected to the classroom.

“We want increased opportunities and better outcomes for students statewide,” said Rep. Mary Felzkowski (R-Irma), co-author of the education plan. “All students, rural, urban, and in between, need access to technology, broadband and advance coursework; this budget proposal addresses all of those concerns.”

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The budget proposal delivers on promises set out by the GOP representatives in their Forward Agenda last fall.

- 1:1 Technology Initiative: providing grants to all schools to ensure incoming freshmen have devices.
- Incentivize District-to-District Cooperation: increasing funding for shared services and whole grade sharing.
- School Referendum Reform: requiring school district referenda occur at high voter-turnout, general elections.
- Teacher Licensing Reform: addressing teacher shortage with common sense reform.

Assembly Republicans look forward to working with our colleagues on how best to move forward on a sustainable education plan that provides equitable funding for K-12 students in Wisconsin.

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