



For Immediate Release:

John Gaier, President

Wisconsin Association for Equity in Funding

jgaier@neillsville.k12.wi.us

715-743-3323

AEF DISCUSSING EDUCATION FUNDING LAWSUIT

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The Association for Equity in Funding was formed in 1992 to identify legislative solutions to school funding challenges. When those solutions were ignored, we sued all the way to the Wisconsin Supreme Court in a landmark case known as *Vincent vs. Voight*. Decided in 2001, the ruling established important criteria for school funding, especially for disadvantaged students. “Wisconsin students have a fundamental right to an equal opportunity to a sound basic education that will equip students for their roles as citizens and enable them to succeed economically and personally.” That standard is clearly not being met. AEF has the data, but educators, administrators, and Board members know it firsthand. The financial challenges of educating special education, low-income, and English learner students have become unmanageable without adequate state support.

The 2019 Blue Ribbon Commission on School Funding Recommendations were another milestone in our state's discussion about school finance. In addition to improved funding for high-cost students, the bipartisan group, co-chaired by Republicans, clearly identified the need to reform the unfair system of revenue caps so many districts have suffered under for decades. Those recommendations have been largely ignored.

Now, in a watershed moment, with billions of dollars available, legislative leaders have turned their backs on the Supreme Court directive, the Blue Ribbon Commission, and their own agreements to improve the inequitable system of school finance in Wisconsin. With Governor Evers’ signature on the budget bill, AEF is alerting the public that the legislature can no longer kick the can down the road--it's time to demand action through the courts, since legislative options are clearly not going to happen.

According to John Gaier, Superintendent of the Neillsville School District and President of the AEF Steering Committee, “Schools across Wisconsin can’t just hope anymore, we need results. When legislators approved a budget bill that did little to address the longstanding challenges in educating high-need students as well as the unfair Revenue Limits that trap unlucky children in poorly funded school districts, they missed a huge opportunity. To put so few new state dollars into addressing these school funding challenges, at a time when state coffers overflow, is more

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than disappointing, it calls for a strong response. AEF is considering all of its options, including filing a lawsuit to right the injustice under which our schools, families and students have suffered for far too long.”

AEF member districts have approved the filing of the suit, and have begun to amass a legal action fund. AEF is conferring with top-tier law firms in the state and nation. We have completed preliminary data analyses, and have begun reaching out to expert witnesses. We have engaged legal, policy, and economic experts. We are identifying potential plaintiffs.

We will be making regular announcements as our plans progress.

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The Wisconsin Association for Equity in Funding (WAEF) is a group of Wisconsin school districts that seeks financial equity in the state system of school financing. The members include urban, suburban and rural schools. The two issues that brought this group together have been the wide differences in the amount school districts have been able to invest in the education of their children and the even wider differences in the property tax burden to pay for that investment.

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