



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Governor's Proposal Falls Short of Needed Reform
Revenue limit relief further shifts burden to local taxpayers

Earlier today, Governor Jim Doyle proposed exempting school districts that meet specific criteria from revenue limits. While the governor's proposal reflects Wisconsin school districts' need for greater flexibility, it falls well short of the fundamental restructuring of our school finance laws that is so badly needed.

"While we appreciate the governor's efforts to address the problems with school funding in this state, his proposal simply papers over holes in the current funding plan and continues the trend of shifting the responsibility for funding schools onto local property tax payers," said Jill Gaskell, Legislative Liaison, Wisconsin PTA. "Wholesale reform of school funding is needed now – reform that benefits both children and their communities."

Revenue limits, sometimes known as *revenue caps*, are state-imposed controls on the amount of money a Wisconsin school district can receive through state aid and local property taxes. Allowing a school district to be exempt from these limits does not mean it will receive more funds from the state; it simply shifts the responsibility for funding schools to local property tax payers.

This means that the governor's proposal will not only cause further resentment among taxpayers, it will also lead to inequalities between districts, as some will be able to increase taxes while others will not.

It is important to note that revenue limits were brought in as part of the state's commitment to funding two-thirds of the costs of schools. Over the years, that support has decreased considerably, creating a situation where the cost of schools has been increasingly shouldered by local taxpayers.

"The state continues to pass the school funding buck to local property tax payers," said Gaskell. "The governor's plan simply speeds that process up."

Allowing for greater property tax increases is not only bad in theory, in practice very few districts will be able to take advantage of the offer. With the recent shift in education investments from state aid to local property taxes, more and more districts are already unable to reach their revenue limits. This situation has become so pronounced that Assembly Bill 461 has been introduced to make sure that districts that go under the limit are not punished with lower limits in future years.

Instead of piecemeal reform and the continued burdening of taxpayers, a statewide coalition of educational and community-oriented organizations, known as the School Finance Network (SFN), is suggesting that structural reform of school financing should be made now.

The School Finance Network has identified flaws in the current system and its plan bolsters efforts to comply with the Vincent v. Voight court ruling, which

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www.aft-wisconsin.org

Fair Aid Coalition

School Administrators
Alliance
www.wsaa.org

Southeastern Wisconsin
Schools Alliance
www.schoolsalliance.com

Wisconsin Alliance for
Excellent Schools
www.excellentschools.org

Wisconsin Association
of School Boards
www.wasb.org

Wisconsin Association
of School District
Administrators
www.wasda.org

Wisconsin Education
Association Council
www.weac.org

Wisconsin Parent Teacher
Association (PTA)
www.wisconsinpta.org

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requires the state to take into account districts with disproportionate numbers of disabled students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with limited English language skills.

SFN has determined that overall annual increases in allowable funding fail to keep pace with real world costs over which school districts have little to no control, such as utilities and transportation. By crafting proposals to fix these flaws, the SFN proposal will allow school districts around the state to maintain coursework in art, music, foreign language, business, and vocational training, all of which are now being cut, providing children with high quality education for which this state has a proud tradition.

For more information about the School Finance Network and its plan for reform, visit www.SFNWisconsin.org.

COALITION PARTNERS

AFT – Wisconsin
www.aft-wisconsin.org

Fair Aid Coalition

School Administrators
Alliance
www.wsaa.org

Southeastern Wisconsin
Schools Alliance
www.schoolsalliance.com

Wisconsin Alliance for
Excellent Schools
www.excellentschools.org

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