
WISCONSIN EDUCATION ASSOCIATION COUNCIL

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*Every kid
deserves a
Great School!*

Senate Education Committee Testimony

May 9, 2001

By Michael Walsh, Legislative Committee Chairperson
Wisconsin Education Association Council

Thank you chairperson Grobschmidt and members of the Senate Education Committee for this opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Michael Walsh, I am the chairperson of the WEAC Legislative Committee.

There are several bills up for review today that focus on providing relief to school districts under revenue controls. I am here to specifically testify in support of Senate Bill 120 relating to increasing a school district revenue limits by the amount spent for school security measures.

In September of 1999, I served as a public member of the Wisconsin Safe Schools Task Force. This task force was appointed by Attorney General James Doyle and State Superintendent of Public Instruction John Benson and was charged with seeking ways to improve safety in Wisconsin's public schools. The group included representatives from Wisconsin's law enforcement agencies as well as other community leaders from across the state.

The Wisconsin Safe Schools Task Force released a report outlining 23 recommendations to keep Wisconsin schools safe for children. Among them were the following:

- Increase the use of police liaisons in schools
- Provide school districts with an exemption from revenue caps for costs related to providing school security and police liaison officers.
- Adopt revenue cap exemptions for school security measures related to prevention of criminal activities in schools
- Provide improvements in school safety curriculum by promoting peer mediation programs and anti-bullying behavior in schools.

Terry Craney, President
Michael A. Butera, Executive Director



Although there were many policy recommendations made in the Task Force's final report, none are more important than the one calling for an exemption from revenue caps for school security measures. Simply put, none of the very important school security measures can be made a reality without giving school districts the flexibility under revenue caps to provide them to children.

The state-imposed revenue caps are preventing districts from spending an adequate amount of money on school safety. A revenue cap exemption should apply to hiring school safety personnel, security technology and violence prevention/intervention programs.

An exemption from the revenue caps could also foster new peer mediation and anti-bullying programs at the local school district level. Effective school security measures will put children in schools that work with highly qualified staff. These strategies will promote positive and caring relationships among students, staff, parents and the community.

Wisconsin is recognized nationally for its safe schools. Schools and communities, however, need to use comprehensive approaches to keep schools, students, and school staff safe. Even one violent incident is one too many. 2001 Senate Bill 120 is a key step toward making safe schools a guarantee in our communities.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak before you today.

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INSTITUTE FOR WISCONSIN'S FUTURE

policy research in the public interest

May 9, 2001

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Testimony before Senate Education Committee

Chairman Grobschmidt and members of the Senate Education Committee—thank you so much for the opportunity to speak with you today.

My name is Tom Beebe and I am a school funding outreach specialist with the Institute for Wisconsin's Future.

For months you have been hearing from your constituents—from teachers, administrators, students, parents, and taxpayers—about the problems caused by Wisconsin's school funding system, specifically revenue limits.

You've heard about:

- Building maintenance and repairs that have been delayed;
- Teachers who have been laid off;
- Programs that have been eliminated;
- Technology that is lagging;
- Spiraling educational costs in the face of severely limited revenue;
- Declining enrollment;
- Underfunded programs for special-needs students; and
- Futures that have been diminished for many of Wisconsin's public school students.

Other than this list, I don't want to discuss the problems because now you have moved to consideration of the solutions. That's the "good news." The "bad news" is that all of the legislation you are considering today merely puts Band-Aids on a badly bleeding wound.

In the long run, you must start talking about reforming the system. The Institute for Wisconsin's Future, however, realizes that isn't going to happen soon. Therefore, it is imperative that we provide relief this budget cycle to our public schools.

The Institute for Wisconsin's Future favors increased funding and flexibility under revenue limits for all school districts. For that reason, we would support five of the bills you are considering—unless there is a better option ... an option that is better for districts and, more importantly, for children.

- IWF supports Senate Bill 4 to increase caps for school breakfast and lunch programs, but we realize it won't help all districts.
- IWF supports Senate Bill 120 to increase caps for school security measures, but we realize it won't help all districts.

- IWF supports Senate Bill 124 to increase caps for increases in health insurance costs, but we realize it won't help all districts.
- IWF supports Senate Bill 149 to exclude certain debt-service costs from the formula, but we also realize that bill won't help all districts.
- IWF supports Senate Bill 73 to eliminate revenue limits, but we realize its political outlook is rather dim.

IWF can't, however, support Senate Bill 153 to increase the revenue limit by 1% of the statewide average spending per pupil because it is unaided and relies strictly on local property taxes. That reliance on property taxes makes this bill extremely disequalizing under the school aid formula. We feel that only property wealthy districts will be able to afford the additional taxation, while the tax effort of property poor districts will be so prohibitive that it is likely many would not even take advantage of the new revenue generating authority.

For all of those reasons, IWF—along with other groups vitally interested about our public school children—supports that “better solution” I talked about earlier. This coalition—which consists of the Wisconsin PTA; the School Administrators' Alliance; WEAC; the Wisconsin Federation of Teachers; the Wisconsin Coalition for Advocacy; and the school districts of Janesville, Madison, and Milwaukee—supports:

- Full funding of the state's commitment to SAGE;
- Increased funding for programs for special-needs students; and
- A 1-% solution that is funded as part of the general equalization aids formula.

The 1%-plan we favor gives school boards the authority to exceed revenue caps by up to 1% of the state per-pupil allowable spending average that was, in FY02, about \$75 per pupil.

At the option of the district, the additional revenue would be considered partial school revenue. The effect of counting it as partial school revenue would be to increase the state's general equalization aid pool by two-thirds of the additional amount of spending. Districts that use this option would then receive additional state aid on their extra revenue.

It is estimated that an additional \$42 million in general purpose revenue would be required in the first year of the biennium if all 426 districts took advantage of the plan.

IWF thinks the aided alternative is important because of its effect on the state's poorest school districts. For example, in the poorest quarter of districts—as measured by property value per member (below \$215,000)—the effect of a 1%-unaided increase would result in an average levy increase of 4.1% or an additional half a mil.

On the other hand, the richest quarter of districts—again, as measured by property value per member (above \$360,000)—the effect of a 1%-unaided increase in property taxes would result in an average levy increase of only 1.5% or an additional one-sixth of a mil.

The net effect is to widen the disparity between Wisconsin's richest and poorest school districts, and most importantly, it widens the learning gap between the children who live in them. The richest districts currently have mil rates about one-half mil lower than the poorest—a discrepancy an unaided 1% solution would increase to three-quarters of a mil.

The impact would be especially hard on Milwaukee, which already faces a structural deficit of between \$4 and \$14 million. MPS would have to increase its levy by 4.5% to use an unaided 1% solution.

As I said, if there were no alternatives, the Institute for Wisconsin's Future could support five of the bills you are considering today. There is, however, a better solution—a 1%-solution that helps all school districts regardless of their property wealth or lack of it.

Again, thank you so much for your time today. The work you are doing is critically important to the public school children of Wisconsin, and I applaud your efforts.

Thomas S. Beebe
Outreach Specialist, School Funding Project
Institute for Wisconsin's Future
315 Maple Street
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538



4797 Hayes Road, Suite 102, Madison WI 53704
608-244-1455 fax 608-244-4785 wl_office@pta.org

DATE: May 8, 2001
TO: Honorable Members of the Senate Education Committee
FROM: Winnie Doxsie, Wisconsin PTA President
RE: Education Funding Proposals

I regret that Wisconsin PTA will not be represented at the hearing in person, but our pool of volunteers were all unavailable today. Please accept this written testimony.

Wisconsin PTA believes that the current school funding under the revenue limits is inadequate. We don't see any of the proposals offered to this point as anything but short-term fixes or band-aids. We would encourage you to consider a global review of education funding in Wisconsin looking to create a funding system that adequately funds schools for all children.

With the above statement in mind we would support:

SB - 4 *To increase school district revenue limit by amounts spent to initiate a school breakfast or lunch program.* Many of our children come to school hungry; a meal is as critical a learning resource as any of the educational opportunities they won't notice if hungry.

SB - 120 *To increase district revenue limit by amount spent for school security measures.* School districts shouldn't have to choose between a school safety office or practice and an opportunity to learn.

SB - 124 *Increases revenue limits for increases in health insurance costs.* We are already seeing staff positions cut because of insurance and / or energy costs that are increasing dramatically. Again I encourage you to help districts with some flexibility to keep programs while you look for a long-term solution.

We would oppose SB - 73, not because we like revenue limits - but rather because this type of "solution" will still leave many funding problems. We encourage a thoughtful process where the balance of taxpayer needs and the responsibility to provide an adequate education to all children are considered and addressed.

Wisconsin has a tradition of sound education for our children. After hearing 14 hours of testimony around the state last fall I am convinced that we have the obligation to help all the children get an education that will enable them to compete nationally and globally - we aren't doing that right now.

I am also attaching my testimony before the Joint Finance Committee on April 11, 2001 for your information.

Thank you.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Winnie Doxsie".



4797 Hayes Road, Suite 102, Madison WI 53704
 608-244-1455 fax 608-244-4783 wi_office@pta.org

DATE: April 11, 2001
 TO: Honorable Members of the Joint Finance Committee
 FROM: Winnie Doxsie, Wisconsin PTA President
 RE: Education proposals in the 2001-2003 Budget

On behalf of the over 45,000 members of Wisconsin PTA I am expressing our deep concern about several issues in the current 2001-2003 budget proposal. I will group our concerns into 5 areas;

1. Revenue Limits and associated funding problems
2. Appropriate funding for programs such as SAGE and Special Education.
3. Diversion of public funds from public schools for the expansion vouchers
4. Support for quality teacher licensure
5. The Board of Education and Accountability

Revenue Limits

Wisconsin PTA believes that the current funding under the revenue limits is inadequate and finds the current budget proposal that further limit revenue for schools districts by eliminating the annual inflationary adjustment unacceptable.

In September and October I was a member of six panels that heard testimony around the state about the negative impacts of revenue limits on our school districts. On January 24, the capitol smelled like brownies as over 600 parents and community members representing over 50 groups and school districts came to share our concerns. We brought over 200 dozen brownies to the capitol demonstrating our concern and the futility of using fundraisers to make up budget deficits. Revenue limits are hurting our children – not “the district” OUR CHILDREN and selling brownies won’t touch the problem. We need to increase money for schools not further limit it!

Problems that need addressed in the short term:

- Give school districts relief under revenue limits.
- Provide help for districts with declining enrollment.
- Provide help for districts with fixed costs that are rising so dramatically. How can a district provide a quality educational program when they are limited to less than 4% increase and fuel cost triple or insurance costs go up thirty percent?

I encourage you to look at the real cost of educating a child – not a state average number. One example of what I mean is this; school districts in the northern part of our state spend a lot of money transporting children to and from school, a much greater percentage of the education dollar than a relatively compact district in the southeast part of the state. Assuming all other factors were equal, which they are not, the southeastern children have more money available per pupil for direct instruction than those up north who spend hours each week on the bus.

Our school districts need and our children deserve immediate relief and I encourage you to find ways to provide some.

I have one final comment on revenue limits. Anything that will be passed in this budget will be appreciated but Wisconsin PTA believes that this problem will not go away without some serious change in the way we currently fund schools and I ask you to commit to looking for a long term solution.

(Attached to this testimony is a report I gave to the Wisconsin PTA Board of Directors in October 2000 after I completed listening to the 6 hearings on the impact of revenue limits that were held around the state. I am including it so that you will have the opportunity to see the reactions of a volunteer mom, who is lucky enough to be the President of Wisconsin PTA. Listening to the problems our schools are having was difficult, troubling and the very real to me.)

Appropriate funding for programs.

SAGE is a program that should be expanded not cut back. We know that SAGE helps children achieve, I encourage you to find money to fund SAGE. We need to *invest* in the future of our children – an investment now to help a young child succeed will more than pay for itself when that young person is reading and able to succeed in school rather than becoming frustrated and dropping out with a limited future.

Birth – 3 Program is another service that helps catch problems early and gets our youngest children with special needs the attention they need to grow and meet their full potential. This program has not seen a funding cut, rather the criteria for service has been raised, leaving “marginal” (that really aren’t) children without services that they would greatly benefit from. Again, we are cutting off our noses to spite our faces; a relatively small investment now will reap great benefits later. Please look at this policy change and *restore* eligibility to the current level.

Special Education WI PTA *recommends* that the state budget proposal be amended to include sufficient funds to reimburse school districts for 50% of special education costs. In addition, WI PTA *recommends* that local school districts be reimbursed at a higher rate when they have children whose special education costs are extraordinary. For these “high-cost” students the reimbursement should be 90% of the costs of services that exceeds three times the state average cost per student.

Diversion of public funds from public schools for the expansion vouchers

Wisconsin PTA is steadfast in our opposition to any public funds being diverted from public schools. The Milwaukee School Choice Program does nothing to address the needs of all children in Milwaukee; instead it drains money away from every school district in this state to give money to private ventures that are not even held accountable or to the same standards as our public school system.

We would *support* legislation mandating that ALL schools receiving public tax dollars are held to the same standards, assessments hiring practices and data reporting.

We *oppose* any increase in the voucher program.

We *propose* using the \$36.3 million slated for increasing the voucher program be used to fully fund the proven SAGE program, expanding it to 2nd and 3rd grades, which would cost \$36.9 million.

Support for quality Teacher Licensure

Wisconsin PTA advocates for the maintenance of high quality teacher education and certification requirements that include; subject matter preparation, design of instruction, the art of teaching and teacher training in Parent Involvement Skills. The current budget proposals do not appear to meet these criteria. Any teacher receiving a temporary license must be required to complete the necessary training to acquire the skills that will enable them to deliver a standard of teaching quality expected of regularly licensed teachers. We *oppose* the budget proposal that weakens the standard for licensing our children's educators.

The Board of Education and Accountability

Wisconsin PTA *opposes* moving oversight for educational programs from the Department of Public Instruction. A politically appointed "Board" is not the best interest of our children; we need to work to keep political appointments out of education. The Department of Public Instruction, headed by an independently elected superintendent of Public Instruction, has the resources and skilled individuals to support education in Wisconsin. We need to keep all services and resources related to education in Wisconsin in one department, the Department of Public Instruction.

Fund the Department of Public Instruction

The Department of Public Instruction functions as a resource and leader for many programs that help our children. There are many services I am personally experienced with but I would point out one - the importance of DPI in working for increased parent involvement. Research proves that schools with meaningful parent involvement show increase student achievement. Please keep DPI funded so it will continue to be educational lead organization we need in Wisconsin.

Policy in the Budget

In general we find the practice of "hiding" policy changes in the budget document offensive and disrespectful. Proposals such as when a school district may hold a referendum or if school will be held on a certain date have no place in a budget bill. We urge removal of policy items from the budget document so they may be considered on their own merit.

I would be happy to expand on any of these remarks and or assist in any way. Our children are 10% of our present and 100% of our future. I encourage you to invest in them now.



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KEN COLE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Senate Committee on Education

May 09 2001

**Patrick Sherman, Genoa City J2 school board,
WASB President**

Good morning, I would like to thank this committee for the opportunity to address you this morning. I am Patrick Sherman a School Board member for 10 years at Genoa City JT. 2. This year I serve as President of the Wisconsin Association of School Boards.

As a School Board member I could support all the legislative proposals that you are hearing testimony on today. School safety which is a concern for all citizens in Wisconsin is addressed in SB 120. There are very few districts that have the resources to start a school breakfast program and SB 4 would help more districts start a breakfast program. A major concern for school districts throughout Wisconsin is the rapid increases in the cost of health insurance. SB 124 will help districts that have seen premium increases of up to 40%. In my own district we have had a 29% increase this year. When you factor this increase into a 3.8% QEO it leaves a \$45.00 increase in teacher salaries. We can negotiate this increase in premiums in the first year of our contract but if we have another substantial increase next year we will have to cut programs to make up the difference. Today insurance costs are now 37% of the base salary cost. Since 1984 health insurance costs have increased

on an average of 10% per year. If we look into the future at a 10% increase in premiums per year and a 3% increase in base salaries by 2018 insurance costs will exceed the base salary of \$45,731. And twelve years later in 2030 insurance costs will be double of the \$63,300 dollar base at an unbelievable cost of \$136,549 per person for family coverage. The last bill that I would like to address today is SB153. This would give school boards the authority to exceed revenue caps by 1% of the average per pupil statewide cost. School districts have been under revenue caps for eight years now. Our average revenue increase has been 2.5% but our increase in the cost of salaries alone has been 3.8%. The last biennium budget placed lane movement outside the QEO and this year average salary increases will be 4.3%. This past winter we saw our cost for fuel to heat our buildings more than double, and by this fall fuel to run our busses will have doubled. The only place left for many districts to meet these increased cost is by cutting educational programs.

As President of WASB I represent all the School districts of Wisconsin from districts with thousands of students to districts with 87. As spoke person for the 426 school districts and the children that attend them, the proposal in SB153 will provide relief to some districts but not to all. The WASB has put forward a proposal that would allow school districts to exceed revenue caps by up to 2% of the average statewide per pupil cost. This 2% would be outside 2/3 funding and would be paid by a mill rate increase on the local property tax bill. The 2% solution would help to address all 426 districts unique and individual needs.

During the past several months I have talked to many of your colleagues on educational issues. The one common thread that has always been expressed is that they admire the work that school boards members do. That they believe that government closest to the people governs best. On behalf of all the locally elected school boards members in Wisconsin I ask you to consider the 2%

solution for kids. Return to us the authority to perform the task we were elected to do, raise student achievement and make sure every child in Wisconsin is successful.

For the past seven years I have been an advocate for better public education on a state and national level. What I have learned is Wisconsin is a leader in public education. We year in and year out lead the country in ACT scores. To continue and build upon this success we must have a concerted effort by state government, school boards members and taxpayers. Thank you.

Patrick Sherman

President Wisconsin Association of School Boards

Vote Record

Senate - Committee on Education

Date: 6.23.01
 Moved by: _____
 Seconded by: _____
 Clearinghouse Rule: _____
 Appointment: _____
 Other: _____

AB: _____ SB: 120
 AJR: _____ SJR: _____
 AR: _____ SR: _____

A/S Amdt: _____
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- Be recommended for:
- Passage *as amend.*
 - Introduction
 - Adoption
 - Rejection
 - Indefinite Postponement
 - Tabling
 - Concurrence
 - Nonconcurrence
 - Confirmation

Committee Member

	<u>Aye</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Not Voting</u>
Sen. Richard Grobschmidt, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Robert Jauch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Kevin Shibilski	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Jim Baumgart	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Judith Robson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Jon Erpenbach	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Carol Roessler	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Alberta Darling	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Mary Lazich	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Sheila Harsdorf	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Totals: _____

Motion Carried

Motion Failed

Vote Record

Senate - Committee on Education

Date: 5-23-01
 Moved by: Jauch Seconded by: Shib
 Clearinghouse Rule: _____
 AB: _____ SB: 120 Appointment: _____
 AJR: _____ SJR: _____ Other: _____
 AR: _____ SR: _____

A/S Amdt: _____
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| <input type="checkbox"/> Rejection | <input type="checkbox"/> Nonconcurrence |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Confirmation |

<u>Committee Member</u>	<u>Aye</u>	<u>No</u>	<u>Absent</u>	<u>Not Voting</u>
Sen. Richard Grobschmidt, Chair	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Robert Jauch	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Kevin Shibilski	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Sen. Judith Robson	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
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Sen. Mary Lazich	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sen. Sheila Harsdorf	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

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