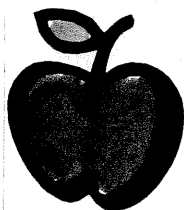

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Legislator Packet

*School Funding Day
January 24, 2001*

Are School Revenue Limits Limiting Learning?

A report from the statewide forums
on the impact of revenue limits on
Wisconsin public schools.

January 2001

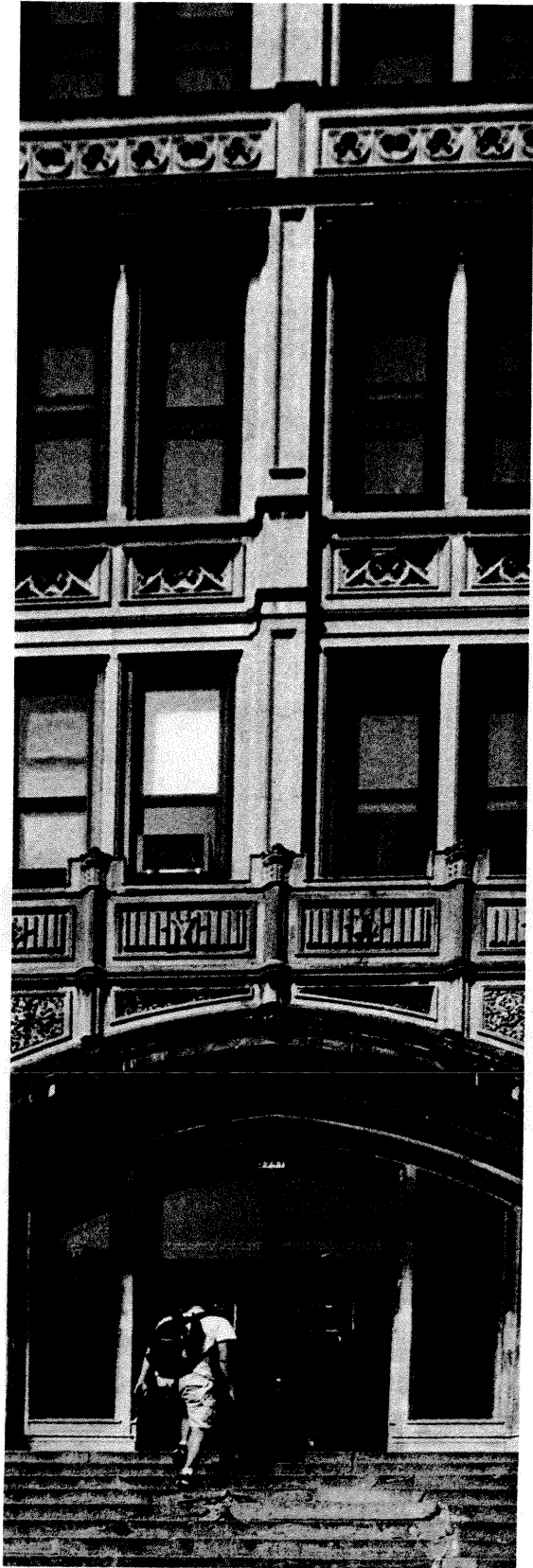


photo by Laura Bensman

Are School Revenue Limits Limiting Learning?

**A report from the statewide forums on the impact
of revenue limits on Wisconsin public schools.**

January 2001

Information compiled from forums organized by the following groups:

**Appleton PTA Council
Big 8 Summit on Spending Caps
Institute for Wisconsin's Future
Janesville Joint Legislative Committee
Price County Citizens Who CARE
Stevens Point Area PTA
Superior School District
West Allis/West Milwaukee PTA Council
Wisconsin Federation of Teachers
Wisconsin PTA**

A special thanks to the people who served as commissioners in Appleton, Janesville, Rhinelander, Stevens Point, Superior and West Allis. In particular, Winnie Doxsie, President of the Wisconsin PTA and Bert Grover, former State Superintendent of Schools, who both contributed many hours and drove many miles to serve as commissioners at all six forums.

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PART I.

“By forcing increased class sizes, programming cuts, and delayed maintenance projects, Wisconsin is failing in its responsibility to educate its young people. We are not only capping the revenue schools can spend, but, more importantly, we are capping the education of Wisconsin’s youth.”

—Jennifer Dye, 1999 graduate of Parker High School, Janesville

Introduction

Revenue limits were imposed on Wisconsin’s public schools in the mid-1990s to help taxpayers who were reeling from a half-dozen years of 8%+ annual growth in property taxes. The idea was simple: To check the spending by the largest unit of government supported by property taxes.

Revenue limits may have yielded a benefit for taxpayers, but it has come at a steep price.

As Jennifer Dye, a recent graduate of Janesville Parker High School, suggests in the quote above, revenue caps are stunting the growth of our youngest generation, the nearly 900,000 students in Wisconsin public schools. Since the imposition of revenue limits, survey data, anecdotal reports, and school balance sheets have all indicated that the limits are reducing schools’ capacity to maintain educational programs and services.

In the fall of 1999, a statewide consortium of school board members, parent organizations, school district administrators, teacher groups, and policy advocates met to plan a thorough assessment of the impact of revenue limits on schools and children. The result was a series of six hearings held throughout the state in the fall of 2000.

Over 1,000 people attended the six public events—in Appleton, Janesville, Rhinelander, Stevens Point, Superior, and West Allis. Approximately 260 people from 78 school districts testified. Parents, students, administrators, school board members, teachers, and community leaders explained—sometimes with clinical detail, sometimes with passion and drama—how revenue cuts are endangering education in Wisconsin.

This report is a compendium of the information compiled during these hearings.

Dye spoke at the Janesville forum. She is a college sophomore about to decide on her major subject of study. “Originally, I had been contemplating going into education,” she testified. “However, after seeing what the revenue cap is doing to public education in Wisconsin, I have decided that this is not a career path that has long-term stability. I have heard many other students say the same thing. College students who want to stay in Wisconsin are wary about majoring in education because our public education system is in limbo.”

A school system that has lost the confidence of its brightest graduates is a school system in danger. Is Dye correct in saying that Wisconsin’s public education system “is in limbo” because of revenue limits?

This report will examine the background and history of revenue limits. It will also chronicle the observations of hundreds of those closest to their impact.

Creation of revenue limits

Public schools have historically relied on local property taxes for revenues, although significant differences in local property wealth meant that state money was used to lessen the impact of these inequalities. Until the mid-1990s, however, property taxes remained the primary source of education dollars. In 1993, 55% of all local property taxes went to schools. All other beneficiaries of the taxes—municipal and county governments, technical colleges, and special assessments—shared the remaining 45%.

But property taxes were rising rapidly. The school portion alone rose nearly 11% in 1993, and total property taxes had jumped more than 7% each year since 1986.

Behind the surge in school costs were such factors as federal mandates to educate children with disabilities, expanded use of computer technology, and increasingly stringent performance standards. Meanwhile, the Legislature had significantly reduced corporate property taxes, putting a heavier burden on homeowners. But wages for the average worker were stagnant after inflation was accounted for. So, homeowners had difficulty paying higher property taxes, especially in property-poor districts with large low-income populations.

Property taxes are not the heaviest tax burden people pay. As a percentage of income, most people pay more in income and social security taxes. The property tax, however, is presented in a single bill only weeks before Christmas. Rising property taxes are a particular burden for those living on relatively small, fixed incomes.

All these factors led to the formation of numerous taxpayer groups that angrily lobbied Governor Tommy G. Thompson and state legislators to relieve the tax burden on families—especially the property tax burden. In January 1993, Governor Thompson introduced his biennial budget with a temporary school property tax rate freeze. The freeze was included in the budget that eventually passed, but was only minimally debated and there was no vote on the freeze itself.

In 1994, with pressure still on to reduce property taxes, the Legislature increased state aid to school districts, from 45% of education costs to two-thirds, increasing state school supports by one billion dollars. Lawmakers also converted the temporary school-tax freeze into a permanent cap on the growth of school revenues. This was intended to make the state's new two-thirds funding commitment affordable. Fleshing out a comprehensive package of school finance reform, the state also imposed controls on increases in teacher salaries, through the creation of the "qualified economic offer" (QEO).

How revenue limits work

Revenue limits cap the amount of money a school district can raise through property taxes and general state aid. Because revenues are limited, so are school district expenditures. There are a few exceptions for funding some programs, but they account for a relatively small percentage of school revenues (federal and state aid for categorical programs).

Revenue levels are based on those in effect for the 1992-93 school year. As many critics have pointed out, this froze in place any spending inequities in existence that year.

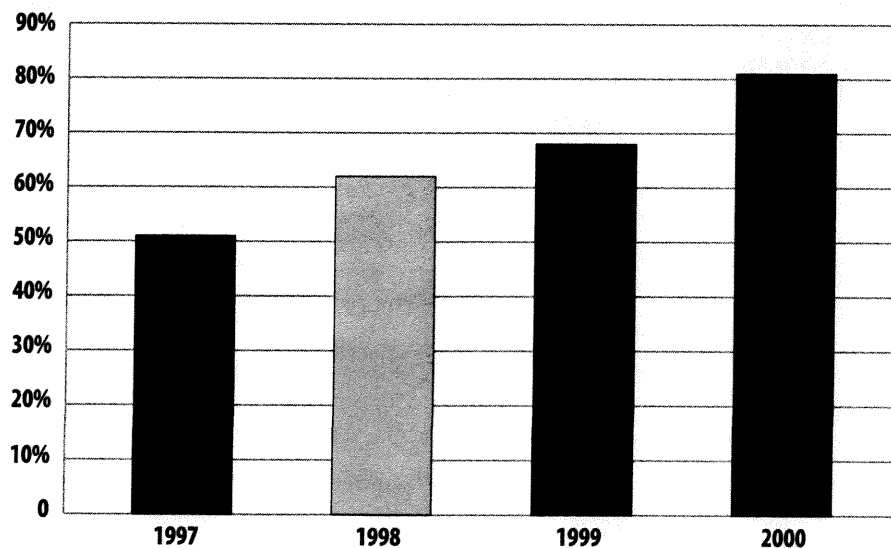
Districts are allowed to increase revenues each year by an amount determined by a formula. That amount is augmented by a minimal number of special exemptions that can allow some districts to exceed limits by small amounts. For the 2000-01 school year, the allowable increase is \$220 per student, or less than 2.6% of the state average per-pupil revenue.

A school district's annual increase is calculated based on the allowed per-pupil increase, multiplied by the district's enrollment. Technically speaking, 'membership' rather than enrollment is used. Membership is an approximation to full-time-equivalent enrollment, and is calculated based on school year and summer attendance, averaged out over three years to smooth out year-to-year fluctuations. Because the word "enrollment" is much more familiar than the word "membership", it is used throughout this report, although calculations were made using membership whenever appropriate.

The use of enrollment means that districts with increasing numbers of students have revenue limits which continue to grow at a more healthy rate, while those with decreasing student numbers have limits which either decline or grow very little. At the time limits were imposed, only one-fifth the state's districts registered enrollment declines. By 2000, more than half were seeing falling enrollment.

Districts are allowed to exceed revenue limits, if the school board authorizes a referendum and voters approve higher property taxes to cover the additional spending.

Chart 1
Percentage of school districts where revenue limits growth is lower than the federal education inflation index



Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics

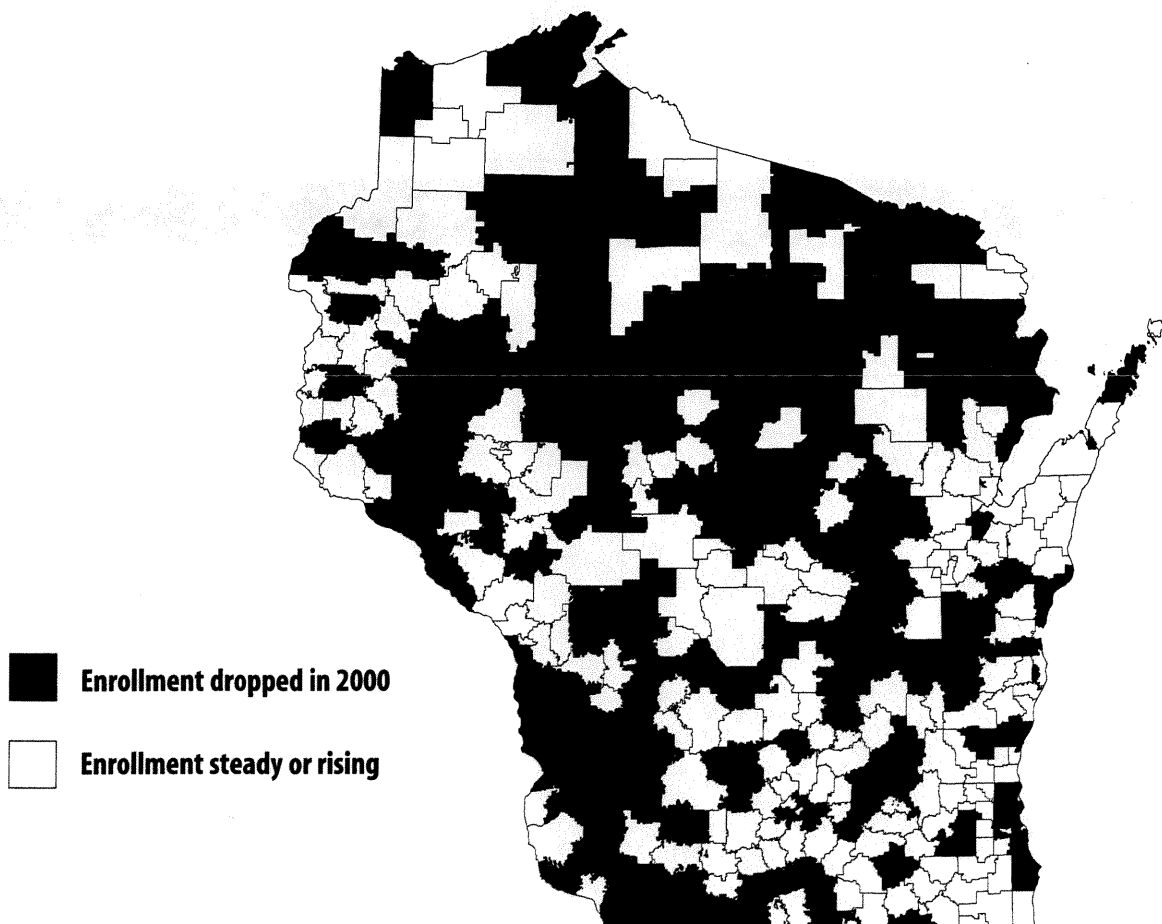
Structural impact of revenue limits

Most school costs have grown even faster than the revenue limits, for example textbooks, utilities, health insurance, and wages.

This is compounded by the new high-standards testing policies, which require performance exams in the fourth, eighth, and tenth grades. The expenses for preparing students for the tests, administering them, and reporting of scores are additional costs for schools.

The revenue limits especially punish districts with falling enrollment, because the enrollment-based formula allows them lower increases. This occurs regardless of the actual change in district costs resulting from fewer students. Because declining numbers of students are usually spread among grades and schools, and not concentrated in one location, there is no comparable reduction in costs for staffing, utilities, transportation, or technology. But demographic trends have made declining enrollment a factor in over half the districts in the state.

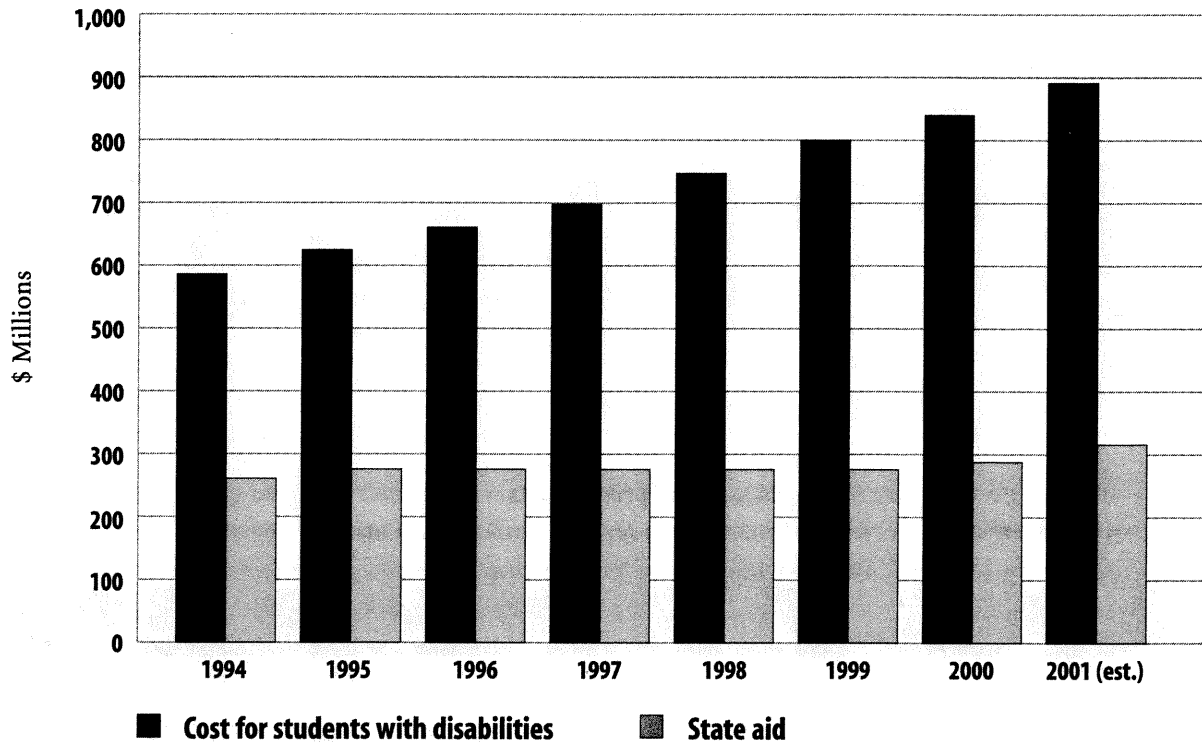
Map 1
State school districts with declining enrollment in 2000



Source: *Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction*

Schools have been swamped by the costs of educating students with disabilities. The number of special-education students has grown steadily. At the same time, however, federal and state reimbursement has shrunk dramatically as a percentage of total costs. Remaining special costs—such as medical equipment, additional teaching staff, equipment for the visually- and hearing-impaired, and special transportation—must come from the regular school budget.

Chart 2
Differential between costs for students with disabilities and state reimbursement



Since the 1993-94 school year, costs for students with disabilities rose 52%, while state reimbursements grew only 21%.

Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

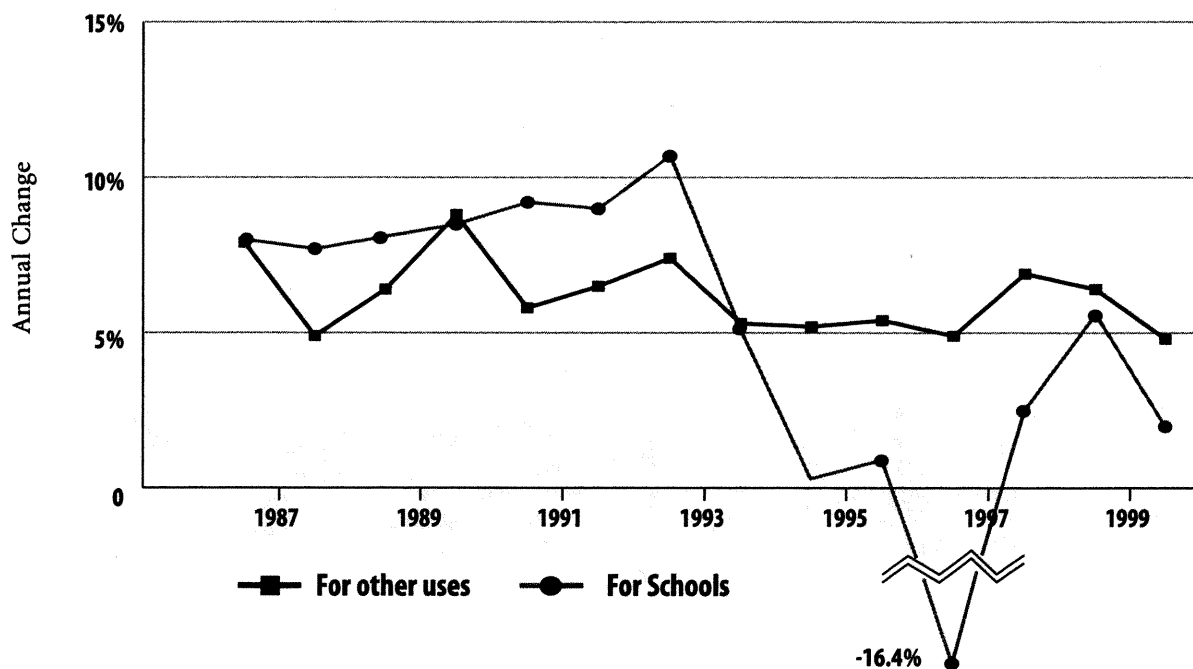
Results for taxpayers

The goal of revenue limits was to help property taxpayers. For taxpayers, the results have been mixed.

Indeed, school taxes dropped significantly when the state implemented its two-thirds commitment, and the growth in school taxes was lowered because of revenue caps. The total amount of property taxes collected for schools fell 6.5% from 1994 to 2000.

While schools were compelled to limit taxes, the technical colleges, cities, villages, towns, and counties were not. During the same period that school taxes fell 6.5%, municipal property taxes rose

Chart 3
Annual change in property taxes for schools and others



Before revenue limits, increases in property taxes for schools exceeded growth in property taxes for other uses. Since revenue limits, school taxes have grown slower than property taxes for other uses.

Source: *Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance*

40.8% and county property taxes jumped 41.5%. As a result, total net property taxes rose 8.9%, despite revenue limits.

Revenue limits on schools slowed property tax growth, but the growing cost of municipal and county governments absorbed funds not used for schools. Revenue limits served primarily to slow tax growth and redistribute property tax revenues from K-12 schools to other branches of local government.

The impact on schools

Schools and public-education advocates were quick to understand that revenue limits were a problem:

In 1996, South Milwaukee parents, students, and teachers took buses to Madison to protest budget shortfalls.

In 1997, a survey by the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the Institute for Wisconsin's Future found 86% of school principals responding faced financial difficulties because of revenue limits.

In 1998, 25 southeastern Wisconsin superintendents met with legislators to discuss the growing

financial crises facing urban and suburban districts.

In 1999, a group of parents and teachers marched 250 miles from Price County to Madison to meet with the governor about the lack of educational resources in small rural districts.

In 2000, angry Milwaukee parents crowded into a school board meeting to protest program cuts forced by a \$32 million budget shortfall.

Annual surveys of school superintendents by the Wisconsin Education Association Council and the Wisconsin Association of School District Administrators show that increasing numbers of districts are being forced to cut programs, services, and staff to keep within budget limits. By the 1999-00 school year, 60% or more of the superintendents reported making budget cuts in five key areas: building and grounds maintenance or improvements; textbook and curricular material purchases; computer and other technology purchases; staff development opportunities; and consumable supplies purchases. In addition, over half of the superintendents were forced to spend down their fund balances to support district budgets.

PART II.

“Locally elected boards of education must be permitted the financial latitude to maintain and improve the institutions which serve our children. I fear that without fundamental reform of revenue cap legislation, the quality of schools will quickly erode and the price we have paid for property tax relief will be far higher than anyone intended.”

—*Anne Weiland, Menomonee Falls parent*

Citizens' forums on school funding

Over the past four years, a number of educational interest groups from throughout Wisconsin have determined that revenue limits have caused problems for public schools and should be reviewed by legislators and government officials. The Citizens' Task Force on Revenue Limits included:

School districts of Greendale, Madison, and
South Milwaukee
Janesville Joint Legislative Committee
Big 8 Summit On Spending Caps
Association for Equity in Funding
Price County Citizens Who CARE
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction
State Superintendent's Parent Advisory Council
Stevens Point Parent, Teacher, Student Association

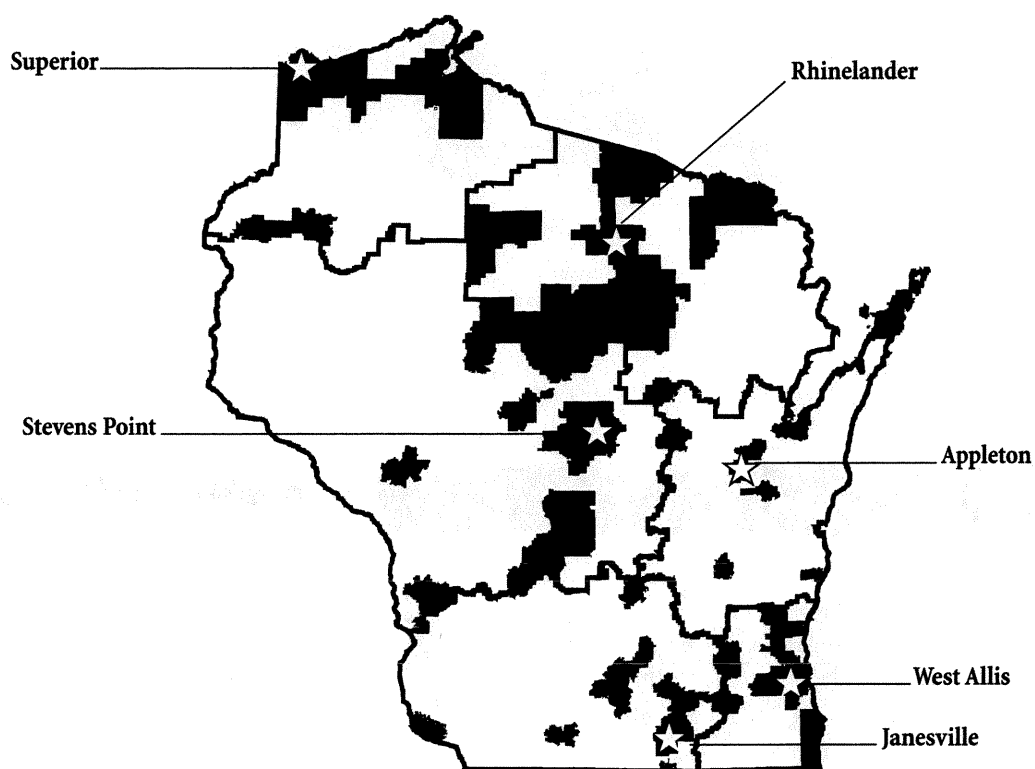
Wisconsin Federation of Teachers
Wisconsin Education Association Council
Wisconsin PTA
Madison Metropolitan School District Student Senate
School Administrators' Alliance
Racine Interfaith Council
Institute for Wisconsin's Future

In the fall of 1999, a number of these groups met in Madison to discuss how to determine the severity and scope of the problems caused by the revenue limits and how to present these concerns to state policymakers.

To assess citizen concern regarding school funding problems, public forums were conducted in six regions of the state between October 5 and November 2, 2000. Forums were held in Janesville, Appleton, Rhinelander, Superior, West Allis, and Stevens Point. Commissioners were selected to hear and compile the testimony of those attending (see Appendix 1).

Map 2

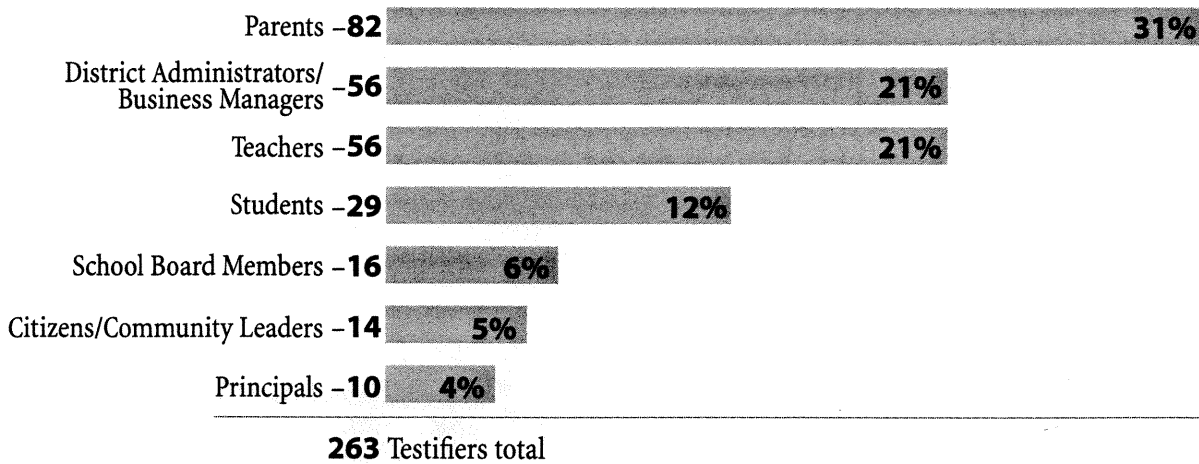
Boundaries of forum regions, cities where forums were held, and school districts represented by speakers (shaded)



Source: *Institute for Wisconsin's Future*

The forums attracted a large and diverse group of Wisconsin residents. Over 1,000 persons attended at least one of the events. Of these, 263 individuals from 78 school districts (18% of all districts) provided testimony (see Appendix 2). A wide cross section of individuals testified, with parents comprising the largest group of the speakers, followed by district administrators or business managers and then teachers.

Wisconsin's public school system is comprised of 426 districts, with a 1999-00 enrollment of 868,544. Minority enrollment is 19%, and the low-income population is 14%. The average equalized property value is \$292,951 per student. Between the 1998-99 and the 1999-00 school years, 214 districts (50%) had declining enrollment.

Table 1**Breakdown of testifiers****Overview of Testimony**

A wide range of districts was represented at the forums—from wealthy suburban districts to property poor urban districts and from rural districts to those in small communities. Regardless of differences in economic and demographic characteristics, there was overall consensus that revenue limits and the lack of adequate state aid to schools for mandated programs are resulting in widespread shortfalls in school budgets. These shortfalls, in turn, are causing school districts to reduce or eliminate programs, services, staffing, and maintenance to an extent that is hurting the quality of children's educational opportunities.

Table 2**Most commonly reported negative impacts of revenue caps**

Impact Areas	Number	Percent
Increased class sizes/overcrowded classrooms	66	27%
Program Cuts (Curricular 69%; Extra-curricular 17%; both 14%)	65	26%
Outdated or inadequate textbooks/curricular materials	57	23%
Staff cuts (instructional and other)	52	21%
Delayed maintenance or building projects	40	16%
Inadequate computers, equipment, use of technology	38	15%
General budget cuts/shortfalls/deficits	31	13%
Lack of adequate supplies or teachers forced to pay for supplies with personal money	31	13%
Staff development cut or eliminated	15	6%

In addition to the overall budget reductions necessitated by revenue limits, speakers targeted specific cutbacks occurring in their schools or school districts that they perceived as particularly problematic. More than one in four speakers cited increased class size and program cuts. More than one in five referred to old textbooks, insufficient materials, and staffing reductions as barriers to effective schools. More than one in six pointed to delayed building maintenance and inadequate computer development as key issues in their district.

Increased class size

Although the state Legislature has allocated funding for the SAGE program to reduce class size for kindergarten through third-grade classes in low-income schools, many students do not benefit. Many non-SAGE schools have extremely large classes prior to the fourth grade. Even some students in the program don't get the full benefit of SAGE because districts are forced to put two teachers in a room of 30 students (they don't have enough or can't build new classrooms). Although the teacher-student ratio is 2:30, studies show the benefits are less than if the ratio was 1:15. In the higher grades, there are many districts with extremely large classes, including Advanced Placement and special-needs classes.

Testimony from throughout the state cited examples of larger class sizes:

"This year we have classes in the basement, on the stage in the auditorium, and in the middle of the library. We have class sizes in the 30s and there are a great number of special needs students in the regular classrooms without the extra staff support necessary" —*Michelle Demerath, Appleton teacher*

"It is common for the average class at the secondary level to have 29 or 30 students. Perhaps to an outsider, this does not seem outrageous ... but in a single class, there are students with a wide range of abilities—from those with special needs to those who are termed talented and gifted to students from different demographic backgrounds. It is increasingly difficult to meet the needs of these different students while the public is asking for more accountability and academic rigor." —*Edward Stied, Janesville teacher*

"My daughter has art and music only one time a week and during that time her class has to be doubled up with another kindergarten, because the music and art teacher is not there enough. That means over 30 5-year-old students with one teacher." —*Brenda Schrader-Johnson, Superior parent*

"As our enrollment continues to decline and we are forced to reduce expenses, we will be forced to further raise class size and reduce teaching staff who assist students deficient in academic areas. (This) impedes our ability to improve student performance on state tests. For a district with a high poverty rate and a significant minority student population, we need to maintain or increase resources." —*Benjamin Villarruel, Ashland superintendent*

"I am a speech pathologist with 42 students on my caseload. Five new students are being added and I know that teachers are concerned about other students who have not even been tested yet." —*Nancy Petit, Appleton teacher*

"My nephew in eighth grade is in a physical education class with 58 children and one teacher. This cannot be a safe environment." —*Tammie Walsh, Superior parent*

Program cuts

In districts throughout the state, school programs are being reduced or eliminated to meet budget shortages. These programs include academics, the arts, at-risk intervention, and special opportunities for the gifted and talented, as well as extracurricular activities and students services. These program cuts are occurring at all school levels, elementary through high school, despite protests from parents and students.

Program cuts were cited in the testimony of numerous individuals from around Wisconsin:

"The contact advocate teacher was cut so middle school students have no parent conferencing. How am I to know if my child is progressing, what her strengths and weaknesses are, and what I can do to help?"—*Karen Zickus, Racine parent*

"This year we only have a librarian two days a week. We cannot go to the library as often to check out books, and she is unable to teach us library skills or information seeking skills to get us ready for a high tech world."—*Alex Kowalsky, Milwaukee Public Schools student*

"For 1999-00, the middle school had to eliminate 3.3 teachers and reduce programs in music, art, family and consumer education, industrial technology, and foreign language. The reading immersion program was cut altogether."—*John Blankush, Superior principal*

"The middle school lost the reading teacher and two family and consumer education teachers as the classes got larger. The elementary foreign language program was eliminated."—*Kathy Engsheim, West Allis/West Milwaukee parent*

"We were forced in the 2000-01 school year to reduce our summer school offerings, eliminate band in fifth grade, reduce a program to improve the writing skills of our students, and reduce professional development for remedial programs."—*Benjamin Villarruel, Ashland superintendent*

"Over a two-year period, we are losing over 16 sections of business class electives at a time when the demand for business classes is growing. In athletics we had a 'no-cut' policy so everyone who tried out for a team made it. We had to eliminate this policy so fewer students are enrolled in athletics where they meet people, stay off the streets, and feel like they belong."—*Ed Gallagher, Ashland teacher*

Janesville forum— South Central Region

The Janesville forum was held on October 5, 2000, and was attended by about 100 residents of the region. Twenty-three persons from 13 school districts testified at the hearing.

81 school districts

151,000 students

Enrollment 95% white

\$258,186 average equalized property value

17% low-income students

16% special-education enrollment

42% declining enrollment districts

"Per-pupil allocation (in Beloit) has not changed since 1993-94. Our buying power has not increased to keep up with increased costs.

Purchases of classroom instructional supplies and materials and classroom furniture replacement have been minimal during this time period. Two educational assistant aide positions for the primary grades, hired three years before the implementation of the SAGE program, have been cut."—*Tom Teteak, Beloit principal*

"School districts are now, seven years later, literally struggling to find the money to fix leaking roofs or to keep their buildings open. We struggle to hold on to current classes and programs, not allowing ourselves to even dream any longer of new and exciting initiatives. Do we really want our schools to make choices between surfacing a parking lot or offering classes to challenge advanced students?"—*Susan Jacobson, Janesville parent*

"Woodshop, auto mechanics, metal shop, home economics, general business, and school guidance services are either extinct or nearing that. These are classes that are both needed and wanted (because they provide) basic skills for future workers.—*Dianne Sutton, New Berlin parent*

"Kenosha has an after-school program for 19,000 middle schoolers in danger of closing. Of those who attend the program, 98% are free of delinquency referrals, 62% decrease truancy, and 72% maintained or improved their grade point."—*Jill Anderson, Kenosha parent*

"Parenting classes have been discontinued and after-school programming for social, emotional, and academic needs has been discontinued. We have lost funding for field trips. Our district has a high proportion of disadvantaged students who will not get a trip to the Great Lakes Aquarium or visit the nursing homes to read to the elderly—all extra travel is cut."—*Karen Saarinen, Ashland librarian*

"The language immersion school has sustained budget cuts over the last four years that have seriously cut into most programs. Art and music have been cut to the bone. We had to eliminate all extra-curriculars except athletics."—*Marcia Lynn Morris, Milwaukee Language Immersion School parent*

Textbooks and curriculum materials

More than one in four speakers stated that cutbacks in textbooks and curriculum materials are a major problem. Textbooks and curriculum materials are often outdated, insufficient, and/or in poor shape. Social science books have incorrect geographical and political information due to their age. Students must share books and are unable to take books home. Textbook replacement cycles have moved from once every five years to once every ten years and curriculum materials for classroom use are increasingly inadequate.

Many people cited textbooks and curriculum as a problem:

"The textbooks we use are the same ones we used when I was a student. You should see their faces when I give them books that look like that."—*Laura Heller, Appleton teacher*

"We have texts at (Appleton) West that are 20 years old. Students say to me, 'Ms. Kading, this text is older than I am.'"—*Margaret Kading, Appleton teachers*

"Our school librarian cannot order one book, one video, or any book stickers because her library budget is zero."—*Ginny Thompson, Appleton teacher*

"We don't have microscopes or scales, but we do have more students. The eighth-grade science department has 25 beakers and 17 graduated cylinders to share among 350 students. In family and consumer education, the sewing machines are falling apart."—*Brian Hanes, Oostburg superintendent*

"In my son's elementary school, the textbooks are old and in bad repair and there's not always enough to go around. This year the exciting buzz was that sixth graders had new math books and were not going to have to share."—*Donna Flake, Superior parent*

"Textbook materials, especially in science and social studies, are outdated."—*Mary Anne Korsch, Superior principal*

"We do not have textbooks for science or social studies in grade four. Teachers create their own with countless hours of research at the library and combing through books at the Learning Shop, not to mention hundreds of dollars from their own pocket."
— Kathy Summers, Appleton teacher

"In my German textbook, the Berlin Wall has not fallen yet, so I definitely think we need new textbooks." —Crystal Nisle, Superior student

Staff cuts

Because staff costs comprise over 80% of most school district budgets, reductions in teacher positions, aides, administrators, and support personnel are the primary mechanisms for meeting budget restrictions. Increasingly, school boards are using lay-offs, delays in hiring, and non-replacement of staff to lower annual costs. This in turn has increased class size, reduced curriculum options, and limited the range of support services available to students in and out of the classroom.

In addition, many schools have almost eliminated staff development, which has been identified by experts both locally and nationally as a prerequisite for high quality teaching at all levels. This is particularly important with the expanded inclusion of special needs children and the implementation of the new state standards and testing procedures.

Staffing restrictions were mentioned often:

"In many cases, first graders know more about computers than teachers because there has been no funding for teacher training." —Carol Weston, Stevens Point parent

"Our problem is the inability to pay teachers. We have a deficit this year of \$370,000 and next year it will be \$660,000. Michigan pays \$10,000 more per year and is recruiting trained teachers. We have cut maintenance staff. Four cooks are running three kitchens, but we can't cut food service. With our low-income kids, lunch may be the only meal they get." —Heidi Garrell, Florence business manager

"Over the last two years, we have cut three full-time equivalency teaching positions. In a district of 1,250 students, it is difficult to cut staff because we do not have economies of scale and the flexibility of larger districts." —Erin K. Gauthier, Palmyra-Eagle business manager

Rhineland forum— North Region

The Rhineland forum was on October 11, 2000. Twenty-five persons from 12 school districts testified at the hearing. Almost half were school district superintendents or business managers. One in three were teachers and the other 20% were parents or school board members.

42 school districts
45,000 students
Enrollment 90% white
\$449,331 average equalized property value
31% low-income students
14% special-education students
62% declining enrollment districts

"Phelps has not replaced teachers who left, has depleted its \$350,000 fund balance, has limited materials and supplies, has placed curriculum for needed programs on hold, and has gone to referendum for regular operations dollars." —Robert Cavannaugh, Phelps administrator

"Elcho is facing budget cuts in 2000. It is unlikely that the business teacher will be affordable. Another key academic teaching position and teacher aides will have to be cut. A desperately needed roof replacement will be put off. The janitor will continue to put larger buckets in the classrooms and in the gym to catch the leaks. Equipment replacement budgets and supplies have already been cut along with textbooks." —Wayne Johnson, Elcho superintendent

"Over two hours per week were added to the teacher load in art, music, and physical education this year so the district wouldn't have to hire new teachers. But, each of these teachers works in more than one building with over 700 students a week. These teachers are desperately worried that they will not be able to do the 'extra's' that Janesville expects, such as the elementary track meets, the all-city 'sing' and various art shows." —*Edward Stried, Janesville Craig High School teacher*

"School nurses are in schools only three hours each day. Children with chronic health needs (diabetes, asthma, ADHD) are monitored by their teacher, the school secretary, or the principal the rest of the day." —*Mary Anne Korsch, Superior principal*

"Marshfield learned last spring of a 30% increase in health insurance requiring a \$675,000 budget cut. The result was a loss of instructional staff for programs like the gifted and talented, a reading specialist, and other programs." —*Dave Smette, Marshfield superintendent*

"Because of the increase in health insurance premiums, people will have to be laid off or reduced in hours to pay for the huge increase. Our hourly employees might have to take a pay cut." —*Dave Wessel, Athens superintendent*

"In my daughter's school, we have no reading specialist. There is a half-time librarian and half-time guidance counselor for 274 students to handle drug, alcohol, sexual, and physical abuse. My daughter deserves better." —*Randy Kunsch, Phillips parent and teacher*

"We have attempted to balance the budget by making \$163,127 in cuts for 2000-01 and placing minimal stress on system quality. But, you cannot cut all teacher overloads, reduce a school psychologist, eliminate part-time staff positions, eliminate 3 full-time equivalent teacher positions, decrease teacher expenditures...and not inflict unknown harm on the school and the community." —*Michael Manning, Wonevot Center superintendent*

"Viroqua is operating with six less teachers, ... less staff development, field trips (and) supplies than two years ago. ... Revenue limits are eroding our ability to deliver a quality education." —*Angie Lawrence, Viroqua parent*

"This year there were 14 positions eliminated: two elementary classroom teachers, five middle school classroom teachers, five high school positions, and one elementary library position. Because of these cuts, Superior students have larger class size—many with over 30—and fewer electives in technology, business, science, math, art, vocal music, and band." —*Jay Mitchell, Superior superintendent*

"The pool of dollars available to teachers for professional development hasn't changed for a decade. In the meantime, the number of teachers has increased, the registration fees have skyrocketed, and the cost of substitutes has increased. It isn't that our school board doesn't understand the importance of professional development—and certainly the policy-makers understand it because they've made it a key component of the new licensure rules—but when school boards are faced with decisions allocating dollars to staff development versus something as basic as keeping staff in the classroom, there really is little choice." —*Mary Lee Reineking, Stevens Point teacher*

Delayed maintenance

One in six persons who testified discussed the inability of districts to cover the cost of building repairs, ongoing maintenance, building improvements, and new construction. Most districts have frozen maintenance budgets for a number of years.

Many people testified that revenue limits are adversely affecting Wisconsin's public school facilities:

"I have had a plastic bag on my computer for six years, because when it rains, it falls on my computer. The roof hasn't been fixed in six years. The children eat lunch on the gym floor, (because) we don't have a cafeteria."—*Don Balliet, Appleton teacher*

"I asked a new teacher what she needed most. She said heat, as she is teaching in a refurbished storage room."—*Marcia Engen, Appleton teacher*

"At this time we are anticipating a 60% increase in natural gas costs for the 2000-01 school year. (That money) has to come from somewhere."—*Merwyn Meyer, Ashwaubenon school board*

"In 1996, we established a capital improvement plan to build a new grade school. We levied \$50,000 a year. We never built that school and the capital fund is gone."—*Dr. Felix Holewinski, Hilbert superintendent*

"Our school has no elevator. We had a student with a broken leg and she couldn't get up the stairs to my class. When she got a walking cast, she had to sit on her rear and scoot up the steps."—*Christine Scott, Appleton teacher*

"Our buildings and playgrounds and stadium bleachers are more poorly kept each year. If we are lucky ... our meager maintenance budget stays one step ahead of disaster. We have parking lots with only one light when we need two or three. (We have) roofs that, while not leaking, are not keeping the heat in (and it costs) us more to heat the building."—*Cynthia DiCamelli, Oregon school board*

"The infrastructure budget has been reduced 47% over the past four years. We have stopped improving our buildings, and we are doing only necessary maintenance. For next year's budget ... I will recommend deferring maintenance in hopes that the 'feds' or the state will come in with monies."—*Marty Holmquist, Cassville superintendent*

"We are one of the fastest growing communities in southeastern Wisconsin. Our schools are already at full capacity, and there are no plans for new schools or extensions to existing schools. As classroom sizes grow, the children's education will suffer. Our library, textbooks and related materials, and computer facilities need updating."—*Rebecca Stolfi, Pleasant Prairie parent*

"Over the past two years, our PTO has spent \$5,000 on new desks replacing the originals built in 1957. Instead of raising money for new books,

Stevens Point forum— Central Region

The Stevens Point forum was attended by about 80 residents of Central Wisconsin on November 2, 2000.

Thirty-one persons from 12 school districts testified at the hearing. One in three were school district superintendents or business managers, and more than one in four were parents.

116 school districts

174,702 students

Enrollment 95% white

\$229,086 average equalized property value

26% low-income students

14% special-education students

54% declining enrollment districts

"Frederic made \$150,000 worth of cuts, which included classroom aides, a school-to-work coordinator, a transportation coordinator/bus driver, athletic coaches, advisors, and club funding. Next year we will have a shortfall of over \$250,000. Our building budgets have remained the same since 1992. Obviously, costs have not remained constant."—*Don Peterson, Frederick principal*

"Stevens Point has reduced staff development; put a moratorium on (the purchase of) textbooks, supplies, equipment; held up equipment purchases; curtailed the writing in-service; reduced maintenance; reduced the programs for English as a Second Language students and the gifted; cut secretarial staff, three administrative positions, student travel, playground money, curriculum development; and the list goes on and on."—*Mike O'Meara, Stevens Point school board member*

field trips, or assemblies, we are buying furniture so our children have a safe place to sit. My initial reaction was to blame the district, but I quickly learned that with expenses like salaries, electricity, and transportation increasing at twice the rate of revenue limits, there wasn't enough for major repairs, much less furniture.—*Frank Finman, Waukesha parent*

"Our 1953 building does not have energy efficient windows. The request to replace the old single panel windows has been made for the past 10 years, but has never made it to the top of the priority list."—*Sheila Omholt, Appleton principal*

"I'm in a gifted program in a Jackson school that's in a storage space converted into a classroom. We have small computers and they use halls for space. And in orchestra, the lessons are in the teacher's office."—*Ian Miller, Stevens Point student*

Inadequate technology

Almost one in six persons pointed to the lack of up-to-date computers, software, and teacher training. In addition, there are insufficient numbers of computers for students to practice their skills, research on the internet, or use special learning programs. Moreover, many buildings are not adequately wired to handle the technology.

Comments from throughout the state dealt with inadequate computer technology:

"I am a parent of two kids from Washington Elementary where the computers are so old and so slow you want to throw them, and the kids in the computer lab are crawling all over each other because it is so small."—*Trish Baker, Stevens Point parent and assistant superintendent*

"The minor increase allowed under the caps has not kept pace with the rising cost of modern education. Our kids will be coming out of the public school system having learned their computer skills on old and outdated computers, because the district can't afford to keep up with the new technology. What kind of education is that?"—*Jodi Thornton, Washburn parent*

"In science, last year, I had to sit on a stool because we didn't have enough desks, and I had to do my homework there. In technical education, the books are old and tattered because they put money into the wood. For science, we use Apple IIE computers and a lot of new software doesn't even run on those old computers."—*Mahalia Morrison, Stevens Point student*

"At our school we have one computer lab and 750 students. By the first day of school, it was reserved through October."—*Brad Wiese, Appleton teacher*

"Students are still taught in a 77 year-old building with a defective, out-dated boiler and chicken wire on the ceiling to keep falling plaster in place."—*Michelle Bjela, Stevens Point parent*

"Adequate computer equipment and software, installation costs, phone line maintenance, physical space, and trained personnel are beyond the reach of too many schools. Fewer dollars spent on the school media center stress local public libraries, especially in northern rural communities where small public libraries are already operating with reduced personnel and hours of access. The result is that Wisconsin students do not have equal access to information and library services to support curriculum."—*Kris Adams Wendt, public librarian in Rhinelander*

"Two of my children had classes in closets in grade school. For the past three years, my fifth grader has had his classroom in a trailer isolated from the rest of the school. The computer labs have obsolete computers that can't run current programs. When the computer club entered the statewide web page competition, club members came to my home to finish the project because the school computer didn't have the capacity to store the data needed for the web page."—*Carol Weston, Stevens Point parent*

Transportation and heating

Sixteen speakers indicated that the annual revenue cap increase was inadequate in the face of fixed costs, such as heating, electricity, and the fuel costs of transportation. In small rural communities, transportation is a costly and critical component of the educational budget. The recent jump in gasoline and heating fuels has made it difficult for districts with no flexibility in their budgets. In the north-west region, which has large and sparsely populated school districts, student transportation is a major expense. When fuel price increases occur—such as those in the past 10 months—the revenue limits are a wall that prevents flexibility in grappling with short-term crises.

Many of those who testified mentioned problems with fuel and transportation costs:

"Antigo is a 520-square-mile district. We spend \$1.5 million a year for gasoline to get our children to and from school. If we reroute anymore, children in (grades) K-4 and K-5 will spend 2 1/2 hours on the bus. When gas prices went up, there was nothing we could do but cut programs."—*Lance Alwin, Antigo superintendent*

"District fuel costs have increased 17% to over \$100,000 this year. Natural gas costs have risen 25% to over \$110,000. Cutting bus routes is not an option. Students wearing jackets in cold classrooms is not an option."—*Donna Spotts, Ashland parent*

"If it could be possible, please just give us enough money to heat our building, please."—*Katie Heisel, Superior student*

Appleton forum— Northeast Region

Appleton, on October 10, 2000, was the second in the series of forums. Approximately 100 regional residents attended. There were 41 speakers from 11 districts who testified. Slightly less than half of the speakers were teachers, one in four were district or school administrators, and one in six were parents or concerned citizens.

72 school districts
169,000 students
Enrollment 95% white
\$350,783 average equalized property value
12% low-income students
14% special-education enrollment
49% declining enrollment districts

"Because of the declining student population, Oakfield is looking at cutting out our drivers' education program; reducing our music, art, and physical education programs at the elementary schools; and possibly going to only intramural sports at the middle school level to save on transportation, coaches, and officiating fees."—*Joseph Heinzelman, Oakfield superintendent*

"Tigerton had to go to referendum to purchase a school bus and to replace the district's van for a total of \$80,000. We have deferred maintenance. Our budget calls for tapping into the fund balance by about \$25,000 this year, and the real crunch for us is down the road when we expect declining enrollment."—*Mike Shimshak, Tigerton superintendent*

Compensation for school staff

Almost one in three speakers—including parents, college students, and academics—pointed to inadequate salaries and the Qualified Economic Offer (QEO) as significant problems that are making it difficult to hire and keep qualified personnel in Wisconsin school districts. Speakers noted that the skill level and commitment of educators is one of the primary determinants of school quality that may erode if qualified persons choose other, more lucrative professions.

Forum comments included:

"Our daughter, who was a teacher, recently quit after five years because she was unable to pay her bills. She is now in pharmaceutical marketing, doing a wonderful job, and her bonus for work was \$18,000. I asked her, 'It's been a year since you've been out of education, how are you doing?' She said, 'I'm able to pay my bills, but at the end of the day, I don't feel like I have made a difference.'"

—Helen Schaal, Green Bay Education Association

"My concern is for the future of teaching. Are we going to get the best when current teachers retire? There are good people out there who have families, (but they) won't be teachers because they can't afford it."—Lisa Britton, Appleton teacher

"Teacher salaries are significantly lower than what comparable college educated professionals make. Lest you think this is an issue purely of self-interest to teachers... data show that—controlling for parents' educational level, income, and later educational attainment—the earnings of male high school graduates increase by 1% for every 3% increase in the average teacher salary in their high school." —Cheryl Maranto, Associate Dean Marquette University College of Business Administration

"There is a teacher shortage in many areas. One of the reasons is money. How many college graduates have to settle for \$25,000 per year? The gap is growing and we are not able to pay signing bonuses and (give) company cars.—Jim Friesen, Owen-Withee superintendent

"This year our district was granted a 3.8% qualified economic offer (QEO). Due to large insurance increases, our salary was decreased by \$385 and we were frozen on advancement.—Jim Ganrude, Blair-Taylor teacher

"It is a pretty harsh reality when a veteran teacher with over 25 years of experience comes away with a net increase of \$11 per month in his or her paycheck."—Dr. James Fitzpatrick, Fort Atkinson superintendent

Referenda difficulties

Lawmakers did provide a mechanism to exceed revenue limits. School districts can ask voters, through a referendum, to increase local property taxes. Thirty-three speakers (13%) recounted their experiences with holding referenda in their districts and testified that this option is often not a viable way of meeting critical district costs.

Speakers noted that many taxes at the municipal and county level are rising, but their spending is not subject to referendum approval. This is particularly important, they said, because the vast majority of voters do not have children in school. Speakers also noted that the referenda are labor intensive and drain substantial time, energy, and money away from the central task of education.

Forum comments included:

"When a district goes to referendum, it absorbs the time, energy, and personnel of the district from three to six months. That means that all other issues which these people should be concerned with get pushed aside until the referendum is over. Increasingly, districts are finding that they have to go four or five times to get people to approve changes in their school budget."—*Carol Carstensen, Madison school board member*

"In Stevens Point, we tried two referenda that failed. I worked on them. Everybody who worked on them is too busy to do referenda. The referendum process, intellectually and theoretically, sounds very nice—the local control, the citizens making the decision—but it ends up on the back of about 24-40 people like me who are taken away from so many things. We have professionals who know what they are doing who could be doing this."—*Trish Baker, Stevens Point parent*

"Most of the townships and municipalities have been reassessed so there has not been great taxpayer relief even though we received two-thirds state funding. The Trempealeau County Board is presently campaigning for a new jail and additional staffing. With this on the horizon, we are not optimistic about a referendum to exceed the caps anytime soon."—*Guy Leavitt, Blair-Taylor superintendent*

"After a failed referendum for building repairs ... a true coalition of parents, community, labor, and civic groups; administrative and school personnel; and townspeople worked even harder to make the case for student needs. Community events were held, and massive outreach, (many) phone calls, and (a great deal of) community education was completed. The funding request was turned down."—*Michele Bjela, Stevens Point parent*

"Our technical education school was built 30 years ago—inadequate with increased technology. We need to remodel, add on and equip it. We went to referendum for \$150,000 and lost by 24 votes. Students lost with the failure of the referendum."—*Patti Schoppe, Northland Pines parent*

"Merrill lost 350 students and had to cut \$300,000 this year. We cut supplies, textbooks, and maintenance. Next year, we will cut people and

West Allis forum— Southeast Region

The West Allis forum was on October 17, 2000. The 180 people who attended were from the urban, suburban, and rural areas of Southeastern Wisconsin.

92 school districts

304,251 students

Enrollment 91% white

\$665,132 average equalized property value

9% low-income students

12% special-education students

27% declining enrollment districts

Because Milwaukee is included in this region, average numbers don't accurately portray some of the demographic information. For example, while the average percentage of low-income students in the region is 9%, it is 81% in Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS).

"In Grafton, our schools are falling apart. While enrollment has remained constant over the past eight years, programs have been cut, classes have become overcrowded, and maintenance has been delayed."—*David Hofferbert, Grafton parent*

"Responses to budget shortfalls can include postponing maintenance, eliminating infrastructure and technology improvements, eliminating extra-curricular programs and athletic opportunities, delaying implementation of security measures, delaying the purchase of books, increasing class sizes, and reducing staff."—*Anne Weiland, Menomonee Falls parent*

programs. We can't cut transportation because we are a rural district. This is a blue-collar district and a referendum will probably not pass."—*Pam Kurcheval, Merrill finance director*

"I am tired of the political rhetoric that the solution is simple—just go to referendum. A referendum is the only time a citizen can say 'no' to rising taxes. They may be angry with the tech school budget increase of over 12% or the county increase of over 5% for the jail. The public school referendum is the only opportunity to say 'no', and, not surprisingly, our community said 'no.'"—*Linda Kunelius, Northland Pines superintendent*

"There is a huge hurdle to jump when you ask people to approve a referendum when it is the only opportunity to say 'no' to a tax."—*John Knowlton, Stevens Point teacher*

Students with disabilities

Costs have increased as a percentage of school district budgets due to the increased number of students with disabilities, the increased costs for medical and educational programs, and the reduction in state reimbursement percentages over the past 10 years. This has implications for both regular and special needs students. Because the programs are mandated by state and federal law, the funds for these programs—that are not fully reimbursed—are a first draw on school budgets. Moreover, the freeze in spending necessitated by the revenue caps sets limits on the program dollars available for students with disabilities. Thus, students with special educational needs face greater barriers to securing appropriate instruction under the revenue limits.

"Our children require specialists—special needs teachers, speech pathologists, occupational and physical therapists—and teaching assistants to help them stay in an 'inclusive' classroom. This requires a lot more money than regular curriculum. The additional money that the state pays is not nearly enough. In our district alone, the number of children enrolled in special needs programs has doubled in the past two years. My daughter has lost access to several regular classrooms. She asked me if this is happening because I forgot to give her a good brain when I made her."—*Kelly Hurda, Bayside special needs parent*

"In Madison, the number of special education students has grown from 12% to 18% of the student population. If the state had maintained the 1993 level of reimbursement at 45%, Madison would have \$5 million more each year. Madison has also seen a big change in the area of autism. In 1996, there were six students identified as autistic. Autistic children tend to be very high-cost because they have very specialized needs which have to be provided. This year, there are 205, but the special education allocations have not increased."—*Carol Carstensen, Madison school board member*

"Students having certain physical needs, such as the hearing or visually impaired, have extensive costs—\$32,000 for one hearing impaired child. These dollars compete with the needs and programming of regular education children. In 1989, our classroom budgets were \$1,200 to \$1,800. In the current year, they are \$225."—*Susan Katrosits, Grafton special education teacher*

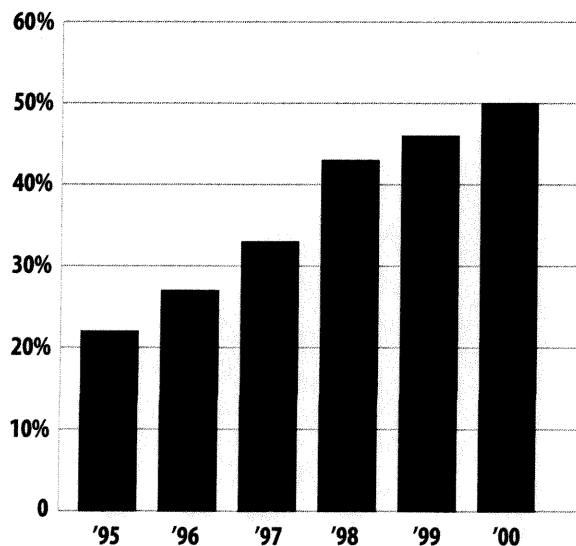
"For children who cannot speak English, a key requirement is an enormous amount of extra help. They need assistance learning English and in the classroom, when coursework is particularly difficult, they need help just to take the tests. There are over 200 non-English speaking children in Shorewood, from 20 different countries, and they speak 27 languages."—*Mary Gundrum, Shorewood parent*

"With the combination of revenue limits and the lack of state reimbursements as authorized in Wisconsin Statute section 115.88, we are forcing school districts to determine which group of children get the better education. I would like to send my son's individual education plan to Madison with a big red stamp that reads 'State Mandated Special Education Not Received Due To Insufficient Funds!'" —*Gail Kolvenbach, St. Francis special needs parent*

Declining enrollment

More than one in 10 speakers cited declining enrollment as a problem that, under revenue limits, is causing severe financial difficulties for school districts. Districts with declining enrollment have increased to 214 in the past three years. Declining enrollment is especially difficult for districts in northwestern Wisconsin, because they are also largely property poor, meaning there is a minimal property tax base to further reduce spending.

Chart 4
Percentage of school districts with declining enrollment



Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Superior forum— Northwest Region

The Superior forum was on October 12, 2000, and was attended by 600 residents of the area. There were 83 testifiers from six districts.

23 school districts
 24,000 students
 Enrollment 90% white
 \$385,950 average equalized property value
 41% low-income students
 15% special-education students
 74% declining enrollment districts

"As our enrollment continues to decline and we are forced to further reduce our expenses, we will be forced to raise class sizes, to reduce or eliminate teachers... to reduce or eliminate summer school which is targeted for students who need academic assistance, and to eliminate staff development programs. For a district with a high poverty rate and a significant minority student population, we need to maintain, if not increase, our programs. The revenue cap, however, will force us to reduce programs." —*Benjamin Villarruel, Ashland superintendent*

"I believe it has been shown that there is a distinct correlation between what public schools have available to spend on education and the quality of the education students receive. (I)t is quite clear to me that more opportunities and a better education could be provided for the students of the Superior School District if additional funds were available." —*Dr. Julius E. Erlenbach, Chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Superior*

Suggested policy recommendations

Of those speaking at the six statewide forums, fifty-four called for reforms in the school finance system.

Twenty-seven people advocated for changes to the funding formula, with thirteen asking that full authority be restored to local school boards to raise local funds for schools. Another seven asked for carve-outs or exemptions to the caps for technology and building expenditures. Four people felt that the revenue cap limit should be greater (for example, at least match the increase in wages under the QEO), and three called specifically for the state to increase or begin funding for mandated programs and services, ranging from students with disabilities and English as Second Language (ESL) students to hazardous waste disposal and accounting standards.

Those who recommended policy changes said:

"Where does it all end? How much damage must be done before the message is heard?"—John Blankush, Superior principal

"A quality education is something I feel so strongly about that I have taken time away from my family and driven 80 miles here tonight to let you know how I feel. Please help the community of Washburn and the other communities of northern Wisconsin supply our young people with the possibility of a quality education by seeing that the revenue caps are repealed and that education funding can be more equitably distributed."—Christina Sauer, Washburn parent

"Locally elected boards should have the authority to exceed the revenue caps or this proud state—which has led the nation in so many educational endeavors—might be headed toward the educational backwater."—John Kammerud, Mauston superintendent

"There should be some measure of flexibility for school districts to deal with emergency situations, such as dramatic increases in health insurance. Special-education costs for mandated programs should be outside the revenue caps and more fully funded by the state and federal government."—Dave Smette, Marshfield superintendent

"It is not reasonable to expect school districts to meet standards, maintain a faculty, pay increasing maintenance, transportation and utility bills, keep up with textbook (cost) hikes, negotiate salary increases, and provide expanded programs with smaller class sizes with the same budget that we had five years ago. Something had to be cut. At some point, any financial benefits you feel that you have reaped will have diminishing returns. I implore you to lift the caps ... and find an equitable way to shield taxpayers and protect schools from devastating fiscal burdens."—Bonnie Dana, Antigo director of instruction

"It is ironic to me that the state highly recommends safety and security, including the deployment of school officers, and then limits the ability of school districts to fund such programs. Either the state should exclude safety and security provisions from the caps or pay the additional expenses incurred by the districts."—Richard Myers, Appleton police chief

"Please tell our small rural districts which mandates are more important—the educational or the financial—because we have reached the point where we cannot comply with both."—Stephen Seyfer, Gibraltar superintendent

Summary

The Citizens' Task Force on Revenue Limits convened in 1999 to discuss how to compile information on problems with Wisconsin public school funding and how to improve the system. A key aspect of the funding system, the group decided, is the revenue limit law that froze school district revenues at 1992-93 levels, except for a minimal per pupil increase allowed each year. Districts can also exceed the limits through a successful referendum.

Although revenue limits and an increase in state aid to school districts have slowed the growth in property taxes raised for education, the net effect on schools has not been positive. Individual districts are facing a range of financial crises, and survey data from various sources confirm the fact that schools are facing increasingly serious cutbacks in basic programs, services, and facility maintenance and repair.

To determine the level of citizen concern about the issue, the Citizen's Task Force organized six public forums throughout the state that were attended by over 1,000 people. Over 260 persons testified from 78 different districts. The majority of speakers were parents and students.

Problems listed most frequently were:

- Large and crowded classes resulting from staff cuts;**
- Loss of educational and extra-curricular programs that reduce student options to learn and grow;**
- Inadequate pay and training for teachers who are the primary determinant of educational quality;**
- Inability to provide adequate textbooks, curriculum materials, and computer technology to ensure students have the tools needed for economic success; and**
- Reduced maintenance and repairs to educational facilities.**

Participants in the citizen forums also cited the problems of declining enrollment and severe reductions in state reimbursement for special education costs as exacerbating factors in the financial shortfalls that districts face.

More than one in five participants called for policy changes. Most were not specific, but they did ask for reform of the current system. Specific recommendations included:

- Increase revenue limits to meet rising fixed costs, such as utilities, transportation, and building costs;**
- Increase state reimbursements for state and federally mandated programs, such as special education;**
- Restore authority to local school boards to raise funds without going to referenda; and**
- Link revenue limit increases to the QEO.**

Conclusion

The public forums were among the largest and most publicized displays of opposition to the Wisconsin school funding system that have ever been held. For more than five years, there have been local, scattered attempts to call attention to financial and educational crises in individual districts. In most cases, policymakers have responded with minimal interest because the call for property tax relief has been the dominant pressure on the legislative agenda.

While calls for further tax cuts remain a priority with some constituent groups, the demand for attention to the education system is increasing. A society as diverse, sophisticated, and complex as the United States must have the capacity to utilize technology and knowledge to govern itself effectively. Public education has been the historic mechanism for ensuring that young people can obtain the training necessary to carry out the needs of the entire community.

Hundreds of people statewide traveled considerable distances to attend the citizen forums. They, in turn, spoke for many more parents, students, teachers, school principals, district school officials, and board members who could not attend on those particular nights.

Information that was presented at these forums reveals an emerging crisis in the state's public school system. Revenue shortfalls experienced in many districts are now being addressed in a stopgap manner. Many districts are using their reserve funds, and, in many cases, these funds will be exhausted in a short time. Classes are already too large and program reductions have already been made. Purchases of textbooks and computers have been delayed, and the maintenance and repair of facilities has already been postponed.

The gap between costs and revenue limits, however, keeps growing, and the consistency of issues across various regions and types of districts is significant.

The statewide forums were a significant attempt on the part of economically, racially, and geographically diverse constituents to draw the attention of their elected representatives to the financial needs of school districts. It is crucial that state and local policymakers act to address Wisconsin's school funding crisis in order to prevent bankruptcies in the short term and to ensure institutional stability and educational effectiveness in the long-term.

APPENDIX 1

Commissioners of the public forums on revenue limits

Representative Frank Boyle, 73rd District
Jann Brill, Director, Wisconsin Indianhead
Technical College
Rita Cheng, professor, UW-Milwaukee School of
Business
Ron Christensen, AFSCME in Superior
Alderman Michael D'Amato, 5th District
Senator Alberta Darling, 8th District
Winnie Doxsie, president, Wisconsin PTA
Tony Evers, CESA 6 Administrator
Nancy Graczyk, president, Beloit Education
Association
Herbert Grover, former State Superintendent
of Schools
Reverend Robert L. Harris, WISDOM
Elizabeth Hayes, member, Fond du Lac School
Board
Darryl Helenius, Candidate for State Assembly,
Superior
Supervisor Ken Herro, Waukesha County
Clem Hintz, supervisor, Steven Point County
Board of Supervisors
Steve Hintz, professor, University of Wisconsin-
Oshkosh
Senator Robert Jauch, 25th District
Robert Jenkins, former judge, Stevens Point
Representative Dean Kaufert, 55th District
Ted Kempkes, publisher, The Bee, Phillips
Bill Knutson, former editor, Appleton Post
Crescent
Ken Krahn, former district administrator,
Marshfield
Joseph Laux, Mayor, Menasha
Senator Mary Lazich, 28th District
Bob Mancel, business owner, Milladore
Bill Marris, business owner, Oconomowoc
John McCarty, Marshfield Clinic, Marshfield
Cathy McGinnis, MD, Stevens Point
David Meissner, director, Public Policy Forum
John Munson, Station Manager, Wisconsin Public

Radio/KUWS
Representative Luther Olsen, 41st District
Sue Post, parent representative, Janesville Joint
Legislative Council
Art Rainwater, district administrator, Madison
School District
Bill Reis, district administrator, Delavan-Darien
School District
Richelle Ridgeway, education reporter,
WGBA- TV 26
Ray Rivard, editor, Lakeland Times, Minocqua
Richard Rogers, Mayor, Fennimore
Jean Rumsey, resident, Stevens Point
Ken Stubbe, director, Superior-Douglas County
Development Association
Mike Wallschlaeger, chair, Educational
Administration, UW-Superior
Representative Sheldon Wasserman, 22nd District
Virginia Wyss, president, Janesville School Board

APPENDIX 2

School districts with representation at the public forums on revenue caps

Adams-Friendship Area School District
Antigo School District
Appleton Area School District
Argyle School District
Ashland School District
Ashwaubenon School District
Athens School District
Beloit School District
Blair-Taylor School District
Bristol School District
Cambridge School District
Cassville School District
Cedarburg School District
Edgar School District
Elcho School District
Elmbrook School District
Florence School District
Fort Atkinson School District
Fox Point School District
Franklin School District
Frederic School District
Freedom Area School District
Germantown School District
Gibraltar School District
Glendale-River Hills School District
Grafton School District
Green Bay Area School District
Greendale School District
Hartland-Lakeside School District
Hilbert School District
Janesville School District
Kenosha School District
Laona School District
Madison Metropolitan School District
Manawa School District
Maple School District
Marathon City School District
Marshfield School District
Mauston School District
Medford Area School District
Mellen School District
Menasha School District
Menomonee Falls School District
Merrill Area School District
Milton School District
Milwaukee Public Schools
Minocqua-Hazelhurst-Lake-Tomahawk School District
New Berlin School District
Northland Pines School District
Oakfield School District
Oconomowoc Area School District
Oostburg School District
Oregon School District
Owen-Withee School District
Palmyra-Eagle Area School District
Pardeeville Area School District
Phelps School District
Phillips School District
Racine Unified School District
Rhineland School District
Shell Lake School District
Shorewood School District
Saint Francis School District
Stevens Point Area School District
Sun Prairie Area School District
Superior School District
Tigerton School District
Verona Area School District
Viroqua Area School District
Washburn School District
Waukesha School District
Wausau School District
Wauwatosa School District
West Allis-West Milwaukee School District
West Bend School District
Whitefish Bay School District
Wisconsin Rapids School District
Wonewoc-Union Center School District

APPENDIX 3

List of testifiers

- Adams-Wendt, Chris, Teacher- Librarian, Rhinelander School District
- Affedlt, George, Teacher, Cedarburg School District
- Aller, David, Student, Superior School District
- Aller, Doug, Parent, Superior School District
- Alwin, Lance, District Administrator, Antigo School District
- Andersen, Jill, PTA, Bristol School District
- Anderson, Barkley, District Administrator, Edgar School District
- Anderson, Debra, PTA, Milwaukee Public Schools
- Anderson, Gary, Citizen, Racine Interfaith Coalition
- Anderson, Elise, Student, Superior School District
- Anderson, Stephanie, Student, Superior School District
- Archambault, Julie, Parent, Superior School District
- Arndt, Jill, School Board Member, Phillips School District
- Axt, Dave, Parent, Superior School District
- Babcock, Emery, District Administrator, Stevens Point School District
- Bacon, Pat, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
- Bailey, Karen, Parent, Superior School District
- Baker, Trish, Assistant District Administrator, Marathon County School District
- Balcer, Marcie, Parent, Concerned People of Racine
- Balliet, Dan, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
- Batchelet, Dennis, Teacher, Elmbrook School District
- Beck, Daniel, Parent, Phillips School District
- Bell, Paula, Parent, Stevens Point School District
- Bergum, Kent, Principal, Superior School District
- Best, Dick, Teacher, Glendale-River Hills School District
- Bettendorf, Cindy, Board Member/Regional Advisor, WI PTA
- Bick, Kathryn, Student, Superior School District
- Bjella, Michele, Parent, Stevens Point School District
- Blankush, John, Principal, Superior School District
- Blewett, Peter, Parent, Milwaukee Public Schools
- Bohon, Frances, School Board, Marshfield School District
- Boyd, William, Racine School District
- Britton, Lisa, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
- Carroll, Storm, District Administrator, Laona School District
- Carstensen, Carol, Former School Board Member, Madison Metropolitan School District
- Casey, Laurie, Parent, Wauwatosa School District
- Cavanaugh, Robert, District Administrator, Phelps School District
- Cody, Jackie, Teacher, Rhinelander School District
- Congdon, Bill, President of Teacher Association, Fort Atkinson School District
- Conley, Laura, Student, Superior School District
- Corgiat, Jerry, Principal, Stevens Point School District
- Davidson, Debbie, Legislative Chair/WI PTA Board Member, Cambridge School District
- Davis, Roberta, Parent, Milwaukee Public Schools
- Debbink, David, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
- DeMarco, Colleen, Parent, Stevens Point School District
- Demerath, Michelle, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
- DeVaney, Deb, Parent, Superior School District
- DiCamelli, Cynthia, Parent/School Board Member, Oregon School District
- Dolsen, Laurie, Parent, Superior School District
- Dunlap, Ronald, Principal, Appleton Area School District
- Dye, Jennifer, Former Student, Janesville School District
- Dymerich, Rodney, Teacher, Phillips School District, Price County Citizens who CARE
- Edwards, Wayne, District Administrator, Pardeeville School District
- Ehrhardt, Jeff, District Administrator, Mellen School District
- Ekedahl, Peg, District Administrator, Milton School District
- Engen, Marcia, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
- Engleson, Linda, Teacher, Superior School District
- Erlenbach, Julius, Chancellor, University of Wisconsin-Superior
- Evert, Thomas, District Administrator, Janesville School District, Big 8 Summit on Spending Caps
- Farmer, Jennifer, Student
- Ferguson, Anthony, Teacher, Superior School District
- Finman, Frank, Parent, Waukesha School District
- Fitzgerald, Jeff, School Board Member, Florence School District

Fitzpatrick, James, District Administrator, Fort Atkinson School District

Flake, Donna, Parent/PTA Legislative Chair, Superior School District

Flanders, Al, Citizen

Frei, Phillip, Deputy District Administrator, Sun Prairie Area School District

Freitag, Gerald, District Administrator, Franklin School District

Friesen, Jim, District Administrator, Owen-Withee School District

Gallagher, Ed, Teacher, Superior School District

Ganrude, Jim, President- Blair Taylor Education Association, Blair-Taylor School District

Garrell, Heidi, Business Manager/Parent, Florence School District

Gaskin, Linda, Parent, Milwaukee Public Schools, MPS SCOPE

Gatzko, Monica, Teacher, Florence School District

Gauthier, Erin, Business Manager, Palmyra-Eagle School District

Germain, James, School Board President, Greendale School District

Gray, Todd, Business Manager, Appleton Area School District

Green, Joel, Principal, Palmyra-Eagle School District

Green, Suzanne, Parent, Milwaukee Public Schools

Gruber, Jeffrey, School Board President, Hartland/Lakeside School District

Guardalebene, Michael, Student, Milwaukee Public Schools

Gucinski, Daniel, Teacher, Superior School District

Gudex, Nancy, Parent, Milwaukee Public Schools

Gundrum, Mary, Parent, Shorewood Public Schools

Hagen, Joy, Parent, Appleton Area School District

Hanes, Brian, District Administrator, Oostburg School District

Hanson, Teri, Educational Assistant, Phillips School District, Price County Citizens who CARE

Harrington, Frank, District Administrator, Merrill School District

Heck, Keith, School Board Member, Racine Unified School District

Heinzelman, Joseph, District Administrator, Oakfield School District

Heisel, Katie, Student, Superior School District

Heller, Laura, Teacher, Appleton Area School District

Herda, Kelly, Parent, Fox Point School District

Hines, Mike, Parent, Ashland School District

Hoeschen, Kevin, Teacher, Superior School District

Hofferbert, Dave, Parent, Grafton School District

Holewinski, Felix, District Administrator, Hilbert School District

Holm, Laurisa, Student

Holmquist, Marty, District Administrator, Cassville School District

Honkanen, Erik, Student, Superior School District

Hughes, Bill, District Administrator, Greendale School District

Hulne, Roger, District Administrator, Shell Lake Schools

Huset-Duros, Peggy, Teacher, Racine School District

Jacobson, Susan, Joint Legislative Committee Member, Janesville School District

Jauch, Cecelia, Teacher, Maple School District

Jindrich, Lisa, Teacher, Wausau School District

Johnson, Wayne, District Administrator, Elcho School District

Johnson, Tina, Parent/ PTA President, Milwaukee Public Schools

Johnson, Douglas, Business Manager, Oconomowoc School District

Johnson, Edwin, Teacher, Superior School District

Jones, Ruth, Parent, Waukesha School District, Project ABC

Joynt, Thomas, District Administrator, Green Bay School District

Jozwiak, Amy, Parent, Appleton Area School District

Kading, Peg, Teacher, Appleton Area School District

Kammerud, John, District Administrator, Mauston School District

Kasinski, Kenneth, District Administrator, Washburn School District

Katrosits, Sue, Teacher/ Grafton Education Association, Grafton School District

Kattman, Robert, District Administrator, Glendale-River Hills School District

Kaufman, Jessica, Student

Kilanowski, Ray, Legislative Chair WI PTA, Appleton School District

Knowlton, John, Teacher, Stevens Point School District

Kolvenbach, Gail, Parent, St. Francis School District

Korhonen, David, Director Buildings & Grounds, Superior School District

Korsch, Mary Anne, Principal, Superior School District
 Kowalsky, Alex, Student, Milwaukee Public Schools
 Kranpitz, James, District Administrator, Minocqua-Hazelhurst-Lake Tomahawk School District
 Kuehl, Joan, President Whitefish Bay PTA, Whitefish Bay School District
 Kuether, Tess, Student, Milwaukee Public Schools
 Kuhlman, Caroline, Citizen, Superior School District
 Kulasiewicz, JoAnn, PTA, West Allis School District
 Kunelius, Linda, District Administrator, Northland Pines School District,
 Kunsch, Randy, Parent, Phillips School District, Price County Citizens who CARE
 Kurchevel, Pam, Finance Director, Merrill School District
 Lader, John, Citizen, Janesville School District
 Lasowski, Mary, Aide, Phelps School District
 Latvala, Russell, Student, Superior School District
 Latvala, Susan, Parent, Superior School District
 LaVallee, Steven, District Administrator, Adams-Friendship Schools
 Lawrence, Angie, parent, Viroqua School District
 Leavitt, Guy, District Administrator, Blair-Taylor School District
 Lehman, George, Teacher, Superior School District
 Levie, Carl, Student, Milwaukee Public Schools
 Lewis, James, Business Manager, Phillips School District
 Magnuson, Richard, District Administrator, Argyle School District
 Manion-Bick, Mary, Parent
 Manning, Michael, District Administrator, Wonewoc-Center School District
 Maranto, Cheryl, Associate Dean Marquette University School of Business Administration, Whitefish Bay School District
 Meyer, Mer, Board Treasurer, Ashwaubenon School District
 Meyer, Cheryl, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
 Miller, Leanna, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
 Miller, Ian, Student, Stevens Point School District
 Miller, Mahalia, Student, Stevens Point School District
 Mirhoseini, Lauren, Parent, Milwaukee Public Schools
 Mitchell, Jay, District Administrator, Superior School District
 Molbeck, Connie, Teacher, Racine Unified School District
 Morris, Marcia, Parent, Milwaukee Public Schools, PUPS (Parents United for Public Schools)
 Morrison, Susan, Parent, Stevens Point School District
 Moscinski, Dave, District Administrator, Freedom School District
 Mowen, Gregg, District Administrator, Verona School District
 Myers, Richard, Appleton Police Chief, Appleton Area School District
 Nacey, Gail, Parent, Superior School District
 Nate, Michelle, Finance Director, Milwaukee Public Schools
 Nelson, Cathryn, Student, Superior School District
 Newman, Freya, Bilingual Education Program Coordinator, Milwaukee Public Schools
 Nisle, Crystal, Student, Superior School District
 North, Dave, Parent/Former School Board Member, Germantown School District
 Nyberg, June, Grandparent, Superior School District
 Oakley, Jim, Teacher, West Bend School District
 O'Connor, Dick, School Board President, New Berlin School District
 O'Donald, Pat, Teacher, Florence School District
 Oexemann, Eleanor, PTA President, Superior School District
 Olson, Shannon & Kenneth, Superior School District
 O'Merea, Michael, School Board, Stevens Point School District
 Omholt, Sheila, Principal, Appleton Area School District
 Paige-Jones, Ruth, Waukesha School District, Project ABC
 Patterson-Smith, Mary, PTA, Appleton Area School District
 Petersburg, Craig, Teacher, Superior School District
 Peterson, Craig, Retired Principal, Superior School District
 Peterson, Don, Principal, Frederic School District
 Petit, Nancy, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
 Phillips, D.J., Parent, Superior School District
 Place, Patti, Parent, Superior School District
 Polkoski, Teri, Parent
 Raspotnik, Sandra, Teacher, Washburn School District
 Reichert, Debbie, Parent, Superior School District
 Reineking, Mary Lee, Teacher, Stevens Point School District
 Reque-Hutton, Kristi, Parent, Superior School District
 Roeben, June, Citizen, Superior School District
 Roop, Connie, Parent, Appleton Area School District
 Ross, Celia, Student
 Rozar, Donna, Parent, Marshfield School District
 Rundle, Mike, Joint Legislative Committee Member, Janesville School District
 Ryerson, Dean, District Administrator, Wisconsin Rapids

School District
 Saarinen, Karen, Teacher, Ashland School District
 Sandy, Stephanie, Parent, Milwaukee Public Schools
 Sauer, Christina, Parent, Washburn School District
 Schaal, Helen, Teacher, Green Bay School District
 Schall-Krokosky, Char, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
 Schiell, Stephen, District Administrator, Manawa School District,
 Schneider, Marlin, Representative, WI Assembly
 Schoenberger, Paul, District Administrator, Medford Area Public Schools
 Schoenbohm, Mark, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
 Schoppe, Patty, Parent, Northland Pines School District
 Schrader-Johnson, Brenda, Parent, Superior School District
 Schulz, Sheila, Parent, Ashland School District
 Scott, Christine, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
 Scullen, Thomas, District Administrator, Appleton Area School District
 Seyfer, Stephen, District Administrator, Gibraltar School District
 Shimshak, Mike, District Administrator, Tigerton School District
 Siegler, David, School Board President, Ashland School District
 Simpson, Ward, Parent, Ashland School District
 Skurka, Charles, District Administrator, Wausau School District
 Smette, Dave, District Administrator, Marshfield School District
 Smith-Johnson, Mary, Parent, Superior School District
 Sobocinski, Phil, District Administrator, West Allis School District
 Spotts, Donna, Parent, Ashland School District
 Starks, Roxanne, PTA, Milwaukee Public Schools
 Sternberg, Belinda, Parent, Superior School District
 Sternberg, Melanie, Student
 Steuck, Lorraine, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
 Stigsen, Vicki, PTA, Janesville School District
 Stites, Will, Parent, Stevens Point School District
 Stogsdill, Marty, School Board Student Representative, Beloit School District
 Stolfi, Rebecca, PTA, Kenosha School District
 Stried, Edward, Teacher, Janesville School District
 Stubbe, Donna, Parent, Superior School District
 Sulzer, Sandy, Student Senate Chair, Madison School

District
 Summers, Kathy, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
 Sutton, Diane, Parent, New Berlin School District
 Taknint, Rachel, Parent, Whitefish Bay School District, Advocates for Education
 Teoh, Maureen, Parent, Ashland School District
 Teteak, Tom, Principal, Beloit School District
 Thoen, Robert, Student, Superior School District
 Thompson, Louis, School Board Member, Superior School District
 Thompson, Mike, District Administrator, Menasha School District
 Thompson, Debbie, Teacher, Superior School District
 Thompson, Ginny, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
 Thoreson, Jessica, Student, Superior School District
 Thornton, Jodi, Parent, Washburn School District
 Tobakos, John, School Board Member, Wausau School District
 Tunell, David, School Board President, Superior School District
 Van Asten, Janet, Citizen, Appleton Area School District
 Vasquez, Serena, Student, Milwaukee Public Schools
 Vengrin, Sharyn, Citizen, Superior School District
 Villarruel, Ben, District Administrator, Ashland School District
 Wallace, Robert, Parent, Superior School District
 Walsh, Tammie, Parent, Superior School District
 Weiland, Anne, PTA, Menomonee Falls School District
 Wells, Sandee, Parent, Milwaukee Public Schools
 Wessel, Dave, District Administrator, Athens School District
 Weston, Carol, President PTSA, Stevens Point School District
 Whiting, Rick, Teacher, Ashland School District
 Wicklund, Jessica, Student, Superior School District
 Wiese, Brad, Teacher, Appleton Area School District
 Williams, Misty, Student, Superior School District
 Wolbrink, Deanie, Teacher, Phelps School District
 Wolden, Dorothy, Parent, Superior School District
 Wolfe, Jenn, Teacher, Superior School District
 Woods-Wahl, Jordan, Student, Superior School District
 Zellmer, Michael, Director of Curriculum, Wisconsin Association for Supervision and Curriculum
 Zickus, Karen, Parent, Racine Unified School District
 Zingsheim, Kathy, School Board Member, West Allis/West Milwaukee School District

APPENDIX 4

Forum reports by region

Northeast Region- Appleton

October 10, 2000
Appleton, Wisconsin

Commissioners:

Winnie Doxsie, president, Wisconsin PTA
Tony Evers, CESA 6 Administrator
Herbert Grover, former State Superintendent of Schools
Elizabeth Hayes, member, Fond du Lac School Board
Steve Hintz, professor, University of Wisconsin- Oshkosh
Representative Dean Kaufert, 55th District
Bill Knutson, former editor, Appleton Post Crescent
Joseph Laux, mayor, Menasha
Richelle Ridgeway, education reporter, WGBA- TV 26

Demographic and Enrollment Data

The northeast region is the area encompassing Door County, stretching south to Oostburg, and extending to Beaver Dam, Marion to the west and Green Bay to the north. The northeast region contains 72 school districts with a total 1999-2000 enrollment of 169,092 students. District size ranges from 115 (Washington) to 18,856 (Green Bay) students; the average enrollment is 1,470. The districts in the northeast region have significantly smaller populations of low-income and minority students than statewide averages, 12.4% and 4.7% respectively. The region has a similar number of special education students (14.0%) than districts throughout the state. The average revenue per member in the region is \$8,300, ranging from \$7,002 in Campbellsport to \$10,462 in Gibraltar Area. The region's median equalized value per student is \$274,749; its average is \$350,783. The K-12 state average is \$292,951.

Of the 72 districts in the region, 35 or 48.6% of them reported a decline in their three-year rolling average enrollment between 1999 and 2000. On average, the decline was 1.3% for these districts. Ten districts experienced a decline greater than 2%, with Elkhart Lake-Glenbeulah the highest at 4.5%, followed closely by the Marion district at 4.1%.

Overview of Testifying Citizens (See Appendix 3 for speaker listing)

Eleven school districts were represented at the forum: Appleton, Ashwaubenon, Freedom, Green Bay, Hilbert, Manawa, Menasha, Oakfield, Oostburg, Tigerton and Gibraltar. A district administrator or school board member represented all of these districts. In addition, parents, teachers, building principals and other citizens gave testimony. The breakdown is as follows:

District Administrators/Business Mgrs.	10	24%
Teachers	20	49%
Building Principals	2	5%
School Board Members	2	5%
Parents	4	9%
Citizens/Community Leaders	2	5%

Total Number of Testifiers **41** **(100)**

Summary of Testimony

The 41 speakers cited several areas which have been negatively affected by the revenue caps in their district or school. In this region, increasing class sizes and over-crowded classrooms were the most commonly reported negative impact (36%), followed closely by outdated or inadequate text books and curricular materials (34%). The table below delineates the most frequently reported negative impacts of revenue caps in the northeast region.

Speakers Reporting Specific Negative Impact of Revenue Caps

Impact Areas	N	Percent
Increased class sizes/overcrowded classrooms	15	36%
Outdated or inadequate textbooks/curricular materials	14	34%
Delayed or postponed maintenance or building projects	9	22%
Inadequate computers, equipment, use of technology	7	17%
Teachers paying for supplies/materials out of pocket	6	15%
Program Cuts	7	17%
Staff development cut or eliminated	5	12%
Staff Cuts (instructional and other)	4	10%

Other less frequently cited impacts were: general budget shortfall or cutbacks (7%); lack of basic supplies (9%) and the spending down of the district's fund balance (2%).

Speakers cited several factors that exist within their district/school that, when considered in combination with revenue caps, have produced further funding problems for the districts/schools. The table below indicates these responses.

Speakers Reporting Factors Exacerbated by Revenue Caps

	N	Percent
The QEO has a negative impact on finances, salary levels, and/or ability to recruit, hire and retain teachers	6	15%
Low or non-competitive teacher wages/teacher shortages	10	24%
Status as a low spending/below state average district	8	19%
Declining or open enrollment	3	7%
Inadequate state reimbursements for ESL, special education and other mandates	3	7%

Five testifiers offered recommendations on improving the school finance system. Three advocated for changes to the funding formula, one for carve-outs or exemptions to the caps for certain expenditures and one recommended restoring the full authority of local school boards to raise local funds for schools.

Summary and Conclusion

The Forum on Revenue Caps in Appleton on October 10 was the second in the series of forums held across the state and provided concerned residents from the northeast region of Wisconsin with an opportunity to testify on how revenue limits have affected their school districts. There are 72 school districts in this region serving over 169,000 students. The population of this region is more than 95% white with average equalized property value approximately \$57,000 above state average. Special education enrollment is at state average. Almost half (48%) of the districts have declining school enrollments. There were 41 speakers from eleven districts testified at the forum. Slightly less than half of the speakers were teachers, one in four were district or school administrators and one in six were parents or concerned citizens. The testimony provided on revenue limits directly fell into six primary areas:

Almost half of those who testified focused on the large classes and overcrowded classrooms due to staffing cuts necessary under the revenue limits.

This year we have classes in the basement, on the stage in the auditorium and in the middle of the library. We have class sizes in the thirties and a great number of special needs students in the regular classrooms without the extra staff support necessary. —*Michelle Demerath, Appleton teacher.*

I am a speech pathologist with 42 students on my caseload, five new students being added and I know that teachers are concerned about other students who have not even been tested yet. —*Nancy Petit, Appleton teacher.*

Many schools have outdated or inadequate textbooks, curricular materials and computer technology as a result of the revenue limits.

We have texts that are 20 years old. Students say to me, "Ms. Kading, this text is older than I am." —*Margaret Kading, Appleton teacher*

Our school librarian cannot order one book, one video or any book stickers because her library budget is \$0.00.
—*Ginny Thompson, Appleton teacher*

The textbooks we use are the same ones we used when I was a student. You should see their faces when I give them books that look like that. —*Laura Heller, Appleton teacher*

We don't have microscopes or scales, but we have more students. The 8th grade science department has 25 beakers and 17 graduated cylinders to share among 350 students. In family and consumer education, the sewing machines are falling apart. —*Brian Hanes, Oostburg teacher*

At our school we have one computer lab and 750 students. By the first day of school, it was reserved through October. —*Brad Wiese, Appleton teacher*

Building repairs, maintenance and expansion is being delayed or cancelled.

I have had a plastic bag on my computer for six years because when it rains, it falls on my computer. The roof hasn't been fixed in six years. The children eat lunch on the gym floor, we don't have a cafeteria. —*Dan Balliet, Appleton teacher*

Our school has no elevator. We had a student with a broken leg and she couldn't get up the stairs to my class. When she got a walking cast, she had to sit on her rear and scoot up the steps. —*Christine Scott, Appleton teacher*

I asked a new teacher what she needed most. She said heat, as she is teaching in a refurbished storage room. —*Marcia Engen, Appleton teacher*

At this time we are anticipating a 60% increase in natural gas costs for the 2000-2001 school year which has to come from somewhere. —*Merwyn Meyer, Ashwaubenon school board member*

Our 1953 building does not have energy efficient windows. The request to replace the old single panel windows has been made for the past ten years but has never made it to the top of the priority list. —*Sheila Omholt, Appleton principal*

In 1996, we established a capital improvement plan to build a new grade school. We levied \$50,000 a year. We never built that school and the capital fund is gone. —*Dr. Felix Holewinski, Hilbert district administrator*

Important programs have been reduced or eliminated.

Because of the declining student population, we are planning to cut Driver's Education, reducing Music, Art and Physical Education at the Elementary schools and possibly going to only intramural sports at the middle school level to save on transportation, coaches and officiating fees. —*Joseph Heinzelman, Oakfield district administrator*

Why should school boards have to eliminate programs that have proven to be very positive to use the money for very necessary capital expenditures? —*Ronald Dunlap, Appleton principal*

Districts are laying off academic staff to free up funds to cover the costs of security and school resource officers. —*Richard Meyers, Appleton police chief*

Schools have inadequate supplies for students, at times requiring teachers and parents to pay for supplies with personal funds

All of my kids' teachers are going the extra mile. I know they are spending their own money and they don't tell parents about it. —*Joy Hagen, Appleton parent*

Teachers will say they aren't going to buy anything for their classroom, but the kids get so excited about a project and they don't have the supplies, they go out and buy it anyway. —*Lisa Britton, Appleton teacher*

For 15 years I have volunteered at the schools. I have pulled data cable through crawl spaces and ceilings to keep costs down. I have bought scissors for the kindergarten and snacks for their snack time. —*Mary Patterson-Smith, Appleton parent*

Many speakers also discussed the low level of funding for educational staff. Both the QEO (Qualified Economic Offer which limits wage and benefit increases to 3.8%) and revenue limits have reduced compensation for teachers, especially in poor districts. This minimizes incentives for talented adults to enter or stay in the field.

Our daughter, who was a teacher, recently quit after five years because she was unable to pay her bills. She is now in pharmaceutical marketing, doing a wonderful job and her bonus for work was \$18,000. I asked her, "It's been a year since you've been out of education, how are you doing?" She said, "I'm able to pay my bills, but at the end of the day, I don't feel like I have made a difference." —*Helen Schaal, Green Bay teacher*

My concern is for the future of teaching. Are we going to get the best when current teachers retire? There are good people out there who have families who won't be teachers because they can't afford it. —*Lisa Britton, Appleton teacher*

Overall, speakers described school systems beset by serious shortages and educational barriers resulting from the revenue limit policy. Speakers were adamant that the policy-makers should be aware of and address the problems caused by spending caps through changes in the policy.

It is ironic to me that the State highly recommends safety and security, including the deployment of school officers, and then limits the ability of school districts to fund such programs. Either the state should exclude safety and security provisions from the caps or pay the additional expenses incurred by the districts. —*Richard Meyer, Appleton police chief*

Please tell our small rural districts which mandates are more important – the educational or the financial – because we have reached the point where we cannot comply with both. —*Dr. Stephen Seyfer, Gibraltar district administrator*

PTA has planted school grounds, painted walls, provided books and gym equipment and paid for field trips for the families who couldn't afford it. We have met our obligation. I now urge the state to meet theirs. —*Mary Patterson-Smith, Appleton parent*