

☞ **07hr_sjr0027_SC-Ed_pt02**



Details: Public Hearing – November 15, 2007

(FORM UPDATED: 07/12/2010)

**WISCONSIN STATE LEGISLATURE ...
PUBLIC HEARING - COMMITTEE RECORDS**

2007-08

(session year)

Senate

(Assembly, Senate or Joint)

Committee on ... Education (SC-Ed)

COMMITTEE NOTICES ...

- Committee Reports ... **CR**
- Executive Sessions ... **ES**
- Public Hearings ... **PH**
- Record of Comm. Proceedings ... **RCP**

INFORMATION COLLECTED BY COMMITTEE FOR AND AGAINST PROPOSAL

- Appointments ... **Appt**
- Clearinghouse Rules ... **CRule**
- Hearing Records ... bills and resolutions
 - (**ab** = Assembly Bill) (**ar** = Assembly Resolution) (**ajr** = Assembly Joint Resolution)
 - (**sb** = Senate Bill) (**sr** = Senate Resolution) (**sjr** = Senate Joint Resolution)
- Miscellaneous ... **Misc**

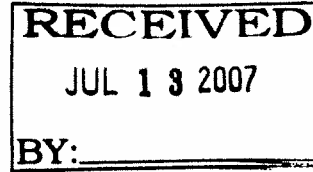
MB



Office of the Superintendent

Lindholm Building 222 Maple Avenue, Waukesha, WI 53186 ☎262-970-1012
Fax: 262-970-1021

July 6, 2007



SARA
Saw

Senator John Lehman
Wisconsin State Senate
Room 310 South
State Capitol
P.O. Box 7882
Madison, WI 53707-7882

Dear Senator Lehman:

The Waukesha School Board Legislative Committee met and discussed Senate Joint Resolution 27, calling for changes to the state's public school funding formula to be enacted by July 1, 2009.

The Legislative Committee strongly supports this bill. The current laws that create a gap between revenue (revenue limits) and expenditures (Qualified Economic Offer) have caused the Waukesha School District to reduce programs and services by \$14,000,000 over the past seven years. The effects of these reductions have eliminated and reduced programming for students that has, and will continue to have, devastating consequences for our students and to our community.

The commitment of enacting SJR 27 acknowledges that a change is needed and is a "call for action" over the next two years. Passing this bill also shows strength and courage of the Senate and Assembly in tackling an ongoing and growing infrastructure issue for our state. I have enclosed a historical picture of program and service reductions in Waukesha to give you an indication of the devastating reductions being made here. I have also enclosed a draft of the potential reductions that may occur in 2008-09 that our Board of Education will act on in November 2007.

Thank you for your help in advocating for public school students.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Frank D. Finman'.

Frank D. Finman
Legislative Committee Chairman
Waukesha School Board

kr
enc

**SUMMARY OF PROGRAM AND SERVICE REDUCTIONS
2000-01 through 2007-08**

2000-2001 Approved Feb. 2000		2003-04 Approved April 2003		2004-05 Approved Jan. 2004
Reduction	Amount	Reduction	Amount	Amount
Shift One C&I Director to Manage Title I	\$45,000	Eliminate Service Bldg. Supervisor/Administrator 1.0 FTE	\$60,000	5% reduction across district budgets
Reduce Maintenance/Custodial Budget (Supervisor and Part-time Seasonal)	\$400,000	Eliminate/Reduce C&I Chairpersons 1.0 FTE	\$62,150	
Eliminate District Public Information Administrator	\$43,000	Reduce Special Education/Student Services Staff 4.9 FTEs	\$176,400	
Reduce District At-Risk Budget	\$225,000	Reduce Assessment Budget	\$25,000	
Reduce District Extended Contracts	\$122,000	Eliminate C&I Secretary 1.0 FTE	\$30,000	
Reduce C&I Chairpersons	\$96,900	Eliminate HS Aides (South) 2.0 FTEs	\$37,600	
Reduce Student Services/Special Education Chairperson	\$13,000	Eliminate Classroom Equipment Placement Funds	\$70,000	
Reduce Elementary Guidance Counselor	\$32,300	Reduce HS Appendix C Co-Curricular Budgets	\$75,000	
Eliminate HS Guidance Counselor (South)	\$32,300	Reduce HS Secretaries 3.0 FTEs	\$90,000	
Eliminate Kindergarten Cap	\$48,450	Reduce Part-time and Seasonal Custodial Staff 2.6 FTEs	\$160,000	
Reduce Transportation Budget	\$68,000	Reduce Special Education Materials Budgets	\$40,000	
Reduce District Tech Lease Obligation with Land Sale Money	\$344,345	Reduce Central Office Cost Centers	\$25,000	
Reduce Planetarium Services	\$16,150	Reduce Student Transportation/Bussing	\$135,000	
Reduce Services to Expelled Students	\$20,000	Reduce Out-of-District Travel	\$25,000	
Reduction of Central Office & School Budgets	\$257,200	Reduce Summer School	\$100,000	
Reduce C&I Secretaries	\$43,200	Reduce Capital Projects Budget	\$96,000	
Reduce Student Services/Special Education Teachers	\$96,900			
Reconfiguration of Elementary Art, Music, and PhyEd Schedules	\$96,900			
Eliminate Bilingual School Home Liaison	\$32,300			
Reduce MS Aides	\$43,200			
MS Supervision Reorganization	\$146,500			
Equalization of MS Staffing	\$161,500			
Eliminate HS Reading Aides	\$36,000			
Reduce Environmental Education Budget	\$30,000			
MS Basketball Intramural Program	\$24,000			
Revenue Generator Added All-Day Kindergarten Program	\$782,155 -\$254,700	Revenue Generators	\$298,000	
TOTAL	\$3,001,600	TOTAL	\$1,505,150	TOTAL \$400,000

2005-06 Approved March 2005		2006-07 Approved March 2006	
Reduction	Amount	Reduction	Amount
Reduce Out-of-District Professional Development/Travel	\$25,000	Increase MS/HS Class size – 27:1 26 FTEs	\$1,300,000
Eliminate Non-Mandatory Assessment	\$25,000	Reduce Secondary Gifted & Talented Staff 1 FTE	\$50,000
Reduce Textbook Adoption	\$200,000	Reduce Technology Budget	\$250,000
Reduce District Nursing Services 1.0 FTE	\$35,000	Increase Grades 1-6 Class Size – Ave<26:1 17 FTEs	\$850,000
Reduce Central Office Leadership 2.0 FTEs	\$141,000	Reduce Bussing	\$100,000
Eliminate DARE	\$20,000	Reduce Lawn Care	\$10,000
Eliminate HS Student Assistance Program .5 FTE	\$23,500	Reduce District Leadership/ Administrative Staff 1 FTE	\$50,000
Eliminate HS Supervision/Security Staff 3.0 FTEs	\$60,000	Reduce Guidance Counselors K-12 3 FTEs	\$150,000
Reduce Elementary Health Room Clerical Staff	\$150,000	Reduce Kindergarten Aides 3.5 FTEs	\$70,000
Reduce Custodial/Maintenance Personnel	\$350,000		
Reduce Library/Media Aides Reduce School Library Media Specialists Reduce Technology Resource Teachers - combination of 5.0 FTEs	\$235,000		
Eliminate School Resource Officers	\$95,000		
Reduce Special Education/Student Services 5.0 FTEs	\$235,000		
Reduce HS Co-op Supervision 1.75 FTEs	\$82,250		
Reduce Secondary Guidance Counselors 3.5 FTEs	\$141,000		
Reduce Co-Curricular MS/HS Programs and Services	\$80,000		
		Revenue Generators	\$170,000
TOTAL	\$1,897,705	TOTAL	\$3,000,000

2007-08 Approved March 2007		2008-09 TBD	
Reduction	Amount	Reduction	Amount
Increase MS/HS Class Size – from 27:1 to 29:1	\$901,000		
Increase Grades 1-6 Class Size – from 26.5:1 to 28:1	\$530,000		
Eliminate Elementary Guidance Counselors	\$424,000		
Eliminate Gifted & Talented Staff	\$397,500		
Eliminate Elementary School Library Media Specialists (Librarians)	\$386,900		
Reduce Elementary Band and Orchestra	\$265,000		
Eliminate Technology Resource Teachers	\$212,000		
Reduce Special Education Staff	\$106,000		
Eliminate Energy Program Manager	\$100,000		
Revenue Generators Transportation Contract Extension	\$100,000		
TOTAL	\$3,422,400		

GRAND TOTAL REDUCTIONS 2000-01 THROUGH 2007-08: \$13,226,855

**TENTATIVE PROGRAM AND SERVICE REDUCTIONS
2008 – 2009**

	Item	Cost	FTE
A	Eliminate Middle Schools Skills Enrichment	\$550,000	10
B	Elementary Reading Aides	\$396,000	18
C	Coop and Youth Apprentice Supervision	\$175,000	3.17
D	Reduce School District / Department Leadership	\$182,500	2.5
E	Eliminate Elementary, Middle and High School Athletics, Clubs and other Co-curricular activities	\$1,200,000	
F	Reduce Bilingual / ESL staff	\$110,000	2
G	Reduce Student Services / Special Education staff	\$275,000	5
H	Reduce At-Risk programming	\$250,000	
I	Eliminate Middle and High School Reading Specialists	\$330,000	6
J	Reduce Maintenance and Custodial Personnel	\$200,000	5
	Total	\$3,668,500	51.67

History of Senate Joint Resolution 27

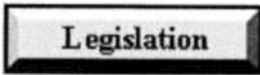
SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 27

Relating to: calling for changes to the state's public school funding formula to be enacted by July 1, 2009.

2007

- 03-13. S. Introduced by Senators Breske, Carpenter, Coggs, Erpenbach, Hansen, Lassa, Lehman, Miller, Plale, Risser, Sullivan, Taylor, Vinehout, Wirch and Ellis; cosponsored by Representatives Pope-Roberts, Sherman, Toles, Benedict, Berceau, Black, Boyle, Colon, Cullen, Fields, Garthwaite, Grigsby, Gronemus, Hebl, Hilgenberg, Hintz, Hixson, Hraychuck, Hubler, Jorgensen, Kessler, Kreuser, Molepske, Nelson, Parisi, Pocan, Richards, Schneider, Seidel, Sheridan, Shilling, Sinicki, Smith, Soletski, Staskunas, Steinbrink, Travis, Turner, Van Akkeren, Vruwink, Wasserman, A. Williams, Young and Zepnick.
- 03-13. S. Read and referred to committee on Education 133

[Search for another history](#)



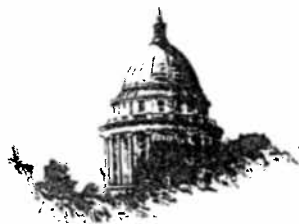
[Back to Legislation Page](#)



[Back to Legislature Home Page](#)



* Copy for bill folder



Wisconsin State Senate

John Lehman

Senator – 21st District

State Capitol • PO Box 7882 • Madison, WI 53707-7882 • (608) 266-1832 • Toll-free: 1-866-615-7510

August 8, 2007

Fred & Pam Heitfeld
2737 Bartels Drive
Racine, WI 53406

SJR 27?

Dear Mr. and Mrs. Heitfeld,

Thank you for contacting my office regarding the school finance formula. As a former longtime teacher for Racine Unified, I understand your concerns.

As you may know, I am a co-sponsor of Sen. Breske and Rep. Pope-Roberts' resolution calling for changes to the state's public school funding formula to be enacted by July 1, 2009. As chair of the Senate Education Committee, I hope to hold a hearing on the resolution in the fall. I will keep you updated with new information when it becomes available.

We must ensure that schools have not only equitable but adequate funding to provide every student the opportunity to succeed. To that end, I am particularly interested in looking at the work of the Wisconsin School Finance Adequacy Initiative Task Force, under UW Professor Dr. Allan Odden, which recommends several changes that could be made to our education system to increase student performance. These recommendations include increases in state funding to special education and transportation.

If you have any further questions about education issues or would like any specific information about Dr. Odden's work, please just let me know. Again, thank you for sharing your concerns with me. I look forward to hearing from you in the future on matters before the state Senate.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "John Lehman", written over a printed name and title.

State Senator John Lehman
21st Senate District

JL/sd



SJR 27
?

November 14, 2007

To Whom It May Concern;

The issue of school funding is a key topic within all of Wisconsin. The catch phrase "fair and equitable" is being used quite a lot on all sides of the issue. For some districts it means the difference between the students having the best technology and for other districts it might equate to a new language teacher. But, for MPS, it means the difference between giving children a chance to succeed despite all the negatives they see each and every night or leaving them to fend for themselves in a dangerous time and environment.

I am a conservative person politically. I graduated from Milwaukee Custer High School in 1994—when welfare reform was the hot topic and nearly every state changed their system. I supported the changes. I was wrong.

Since welfare reform, a staggering amount of MPS students have been diagnosed with a "Special Education" label and the districts graduation requirements, behavior issues, and quality of services and classes offered has declined tragically. Oddly enough, the number of families who now receive social security disability benefits within the city of Milwaukee has risen dramatically. As a result, the state adopted the school voucher program. This, unfortunately, has led to a string of issues with unqualified, unprofessional, even fraudulent, schools throughout the state and even more within the city of Milwaukee.

This is something that I believe both schools and government need to stop and find a solution to. That solution is to restore education in the city of Milwaukee to what it once was, despite what the federal and state test scores say and how those results translate to school budgets. There once were programs that taught job skills throughout MPS. Schools were not only there to send kids to college, but they also helped students experience and learn the trades and establish the work ethic to become productive citizens upon graduation.

I teach students with serious emotional and behavioral issues at South Division High School. The majority of my students have been exposed to lead paint, poisons, drugs, and a number of other health hazards. All of them have been over-exposed to the dangers of living in poverty on the streets of a major urban environment. Many of my students live with foster parents, in group homes, or deal with many of the negative aspects of today's urban world face to face every day.

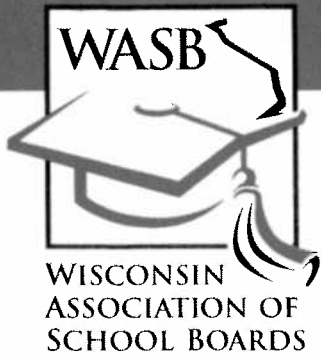
My school cannot afford the activities and personnel that will engage my students, challenge them to move away from the streets, and give them long term hope. Wood, metal, and auto shops have no teachers or resources to engage and challenge students to find a decent job after high school.

South Division High School in Milwaukee is a beautiful school with amazing student diversity ratios, strong community bonds, and a caring, strong, well educated and capable staff. Any rural or suburban school would have a difficult time matching the facilities and staff at South Division. Still, year after year the school sinks deeper and deeper into a seemingly inescapable abyss within the funding criteria of the state, federal, and local governments because our students do not read or calculate as well as those from other districts.

Please, remember this when you go back to your meetings and debates over school funding. Remember that for every one of my students who leaves high school and gives in to the negative surroundings of the streets, this state very well might spend hundreds of thousands of dollars on one day later. You can invest the money now and do the very best you can to provide the kind of schools that can truly reach all students, or deal with the consequences of doing nothing later.

Joshua Resnick
Teacher- Special Education
South Division High School
Milwaukee, WI 53210





122 W. WASHINGTON AVENUE, MADISON, WI 53703
PHONE: 608-257-2622 • FAX: 608-257-8386

JOHN H. ASHLEY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

TO: Members, Senate Committee on Education
FROM: Dan Rossmiller, Legislative Services Director
DATE: November 15, 2007
RE: **Senate Joint Resolution 27**, relating to: calling for changes to
the state's public school funding formula to be enacted by July 1, 2009.

In Wisconsin, as in many other states, public education is a statewide function governed by locally elected school boards. School board members are ultimately accountable to the citizens and taxpayers of each community. For those reasons, school boards have a different role than many of the other groups (and individuals) you will hear from today.

The governance of public education is a partnership between the state and local school boards. That partnership was eroded during the protracted 2007-09 state budget process. It will take continuing dialogue between state lawmakers and local school board members to move forward.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards (WASB) is very concerned that the Legislature moved away from the principle of equalization when it increased the school levy credit by 26 percent and increased general equalization aid by less than one percent in the recently enacted 2007-09 state budget. We hope this is an aberration and does not reflect a trend in future school funding.

You will hear testimony today that school boards, through the WASB, are working as part of a coalition effort to come up with a school funding plan, which is certainly true.

However, it is also true that because school boards fill a unique combination of roles—as advocates for children, managers of teachers and staff, and stewards of public funds—school boards have a global set of concerns. School boards are the locally elected body ultimately responsible for budget decisions at the local level, including decisions about raising local revenues necessary to support the educational program of each district, and they are ultimately accountable to the voters for those decisions.

School boards see a strong need to both maintain appropriate local control and to contain school rising costs, where possible, and seek efficiencies with regard to:

- health care benefits for teachers and staff;
- transportation and energy costs; and
- pupil services needed to enable all children, including especially those identified in the *Vincent v. Voight* decision (those needing special education or ELL services and those who are from impoverished households) to meet state and federal accountability standards.

Revenue limits and the major costs of operating schools (particularly personnel costs) are not aligned under the current funding system. Eighty percent or more of a typical school district's costs are associated with personnel costs—salaries and fringe benefits. Two thirds or more of overall costs are associated with teacher compensation, yet the Legislature has tied teacher salary and benefit cost increases to a different rate than the rate at which it allows district revenues to be adjusted under the revenue limits. This misalignment, ties the hands of school officials who are trying to meet the high expectations we set for public education in our state. Consider:

- The qualified economic offer (QEO) law allows districts to avoid interest arbitration if the board offers at least a 3.8 percent increase in salary and benefits, and maintains the existing package of benefits including health insurance coverage. Because of legislative changes to the QEO, the actual increased cost of implementing a QEO is not 3.8 percent, but is closer to 4.3 percent.
- The average annual rate of inflation between 1993-94, when the QEO and revenue limits were first implemented, and 2005-06 was 2.6 percent, which is well below 3.8 percent, let alone 4.3 percent.

The WASB believes that to be successful and sustainable, school funding reform must take these concerns into account.

The joint resolution before you today calls mainly for changes to be made to the resource or revenue side of the school funding equation. School boards are interested in the total package—both revenues and costs.

School boards need to have the tools available to address the items that drive up the costs of educating children if there is to be a comprehensive answer to the school funding question.

School boards recognize that we do not have all the answers. We are willing to work collaboratively with others—such as the members of the School Finance Network—to find answers. But school board members also recognize that unless we also look at both sides of the ledger—at controlling costs as well as providing necessary resources—the goal of school funding reform will remain elusive.





November 15, 2007

Wisconsin Senate Education Committee
Madison, WI

HAND DELIVERED

RE: *Senate Joint Resolution 27*

Dear Chairman Lehman and Education Committee Members:

I am here on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin, which works to defend the rights and liberties guaranteed to all people in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States and the state of Wisconsin. Among its other actions, the ACLU of Wisconsin works to extend rights to those segments of our population that traditionally have been denied their rights, including children; people of color; people with disabilities; and the poor.

Our concerns include ensuring that our state provides a meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education to all children in Wisconsin, regardless of race, income, ethnicity, or disability. In 2000, the Wisconsin Supreme Court defined the contours of that constitutional right.

Wisconsin students have a fundamental right to an equal opportunity for a sound basic education. An equal opportunity for a sound basic education is one that will equip students for their roles as citizens and enable them to succeed economically and personally. The legislature has articulated a standard for equal opportunity for a sound basic education . . . as the opportunity for students to be proficient in mathematics, science, reading and writing, geography, and history, and for them to receive instruction in the arts and music, vocational training, social sciences, health, physical education and foreign language, in accordance with their age and aptitude. An equal opportunity for a sound basic education acknowledges that students and districts are not fungible and takes into account districts with disproportionate numbers of disabled students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with limited English language skills . . .

Vincent v. Voight, 614 N.W.2d 388, 396-7 (Wis. 2000).

The Wisconsin constitution guarantees those rights and opportunities to each student in this state. Throughout Wisconsin, there are many, many dedicated teachers and administrators, and pupils eager to learn. Yet we also know that not all Wisconsin students have the meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education which our constitution requires. Not all students have access to all the course offerings - both academic and non-academic - required by law. Programs to aid low income students and other vulnerable populations are insufficient to meet the needs of all students who qualify for them, and too often ignore the needs of students who do not fall into a narrowly defined classification for a categorical eligibility problem. We see that already, too often, there is a lack of necessary resources to assist all students in meeting proficiency standards.

We understand that there is a budget crisis which has been building for years. Nevertheless,

it is the constitutional obligation of the state of Wisconsin to ascertain what programs, services and facilities are needed to help all students succeed; to ensure that adequate resources exist; and to distribute those resources in a manner that will guarantee a sound basic education for all students.

Rather than continue to drain resources from our classrooms, the Wisconsin legislature must take all possible steps to ensure that every child in Wisconsin has a full and meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education. We urge you to redouble your efforts to ensure a fair and adequate funding system statewide.

Respectfully submitted,



Mary Jo Schiavoni
Attorney at Law

On Behalf of:
American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin
207 E. Buffalo St., Ste. 325
Milwaukee, WI 53202



LENA C. TAYLOR

Wisconsin State Senator • 4th District

SJR 27
?

HERE TO SERVE YOU!

11/15/07

Chair Lehman,

Milwaukee Public School Board Member Charlene Hardin stopped in our office to request assistance in possibly testifying as soon as respectfully possible due to another scheduled meeting in Milwaukee.

Any consideration that can be given to her request would be greatly appreciated.

Thank you,

C. Michelle Bryant
Chief of Staff
Senator Lena C. Taylor



November 15, 2007

To The Members of the Senate Education Committee:

My name is Kelly McMahon, and I teach K5 for Milwaukee Public Schools. I am writing to ask you all to vote in support of Senate Joint Resolution 27, which calls for the Legislature to fix the current School Funding Formula by July 2009.

This fall, I saw first hand how the current school funding formula isn't working for my school, Milwaukee Public Schools, or other school districts with declining enrollment. This year, for the very first time, my school did not reach our third Friday enrollment numbers that is used to determine the amount of school aid we would receive for the school year. What resulted in our failure to reach our goal number should never happen to the students in Milwaukee, or anywhere across the state.

Due to our failure to reach our targeted student population number, my school was forced to cut two teachers and our Library/Media Specialist. This may not sound like big deal, but it had a negative impact on too many students. At a time in the school year, where children have finally learned the rules, expectations, routines and feel comfortable in there new classroom and teacher, over forty students at Lancaster Elementary had their lives at school shuffled around because we had to cut two teacher positions. These students either had to learn new rules, routines, and expectations for a new teacher, or they had to get use to having both a new teacher and a new classroom. This abrupt transition took place after nearly an entire month of school had passed.

The fact that this situation plays out all across Milwaukee Public Schools every year is unfair to the state's students with the most needs. MPS lost roughly 3,000 students this year alone. With the loss of students, my district has had to make tough choices about what to cut each year. Unfortunately for the students attending MPS schools, these cuts have slashed or completely eliminated educational and extracurricular programs that allow students to excel in outside of the regular educational classroom.

The problem of declining enrollment is only one example of how the current school funding formula is destroying Milwaukee Public Schools. Another serious problem with the current school funding formula is how the state figures out how much money the state will fund per pupil under the state equalization formula.

Currently, roughly 80% of the students attending MPS qualify for free or reduced lunch. Yet, because the 18,000 students who are attending a voucher school are not counted in the school equalization formula, MPS students appear to be wealthier in the eyes of the state than what they really are. A recent study showed that Milwaukee has the 8th highest percentage of citizens living at or below the line of poverty. The level of poverty in Milwaukee is increasing at the same time the value of property is increasing. Due to our declining enrollment, the increase of property value, and the omission of the voucher students in the school equalization aid count, Milwaukee is losing state aid at a drastic rate, and Milwaukee tax payers are being forced to pay the bill. It was only a couple of

weeks ago that the MPS School Board wanted to raise the school tax levy by 16.4%, which was the maximum allowed under the current school funding formula. The reality of the financial situation in Milwaukee forced the school board to increase the school tax levy by only nine percent. This decision has detrimental consequences regarding MPS' funds for years to come. By choosing not to raise the taxpayer's share of funding our schools by 16.4%, MPS will be punished for not taxing to the maximum under the current school funding formula. This will result in MPS Administration and School Board facing the possibility of having to increase the school tax levy by double-digit figures for years to come.

The current school funding formula is severely broken, and unfair to the students and taxpaying citizens of Milwaukee. As a result, it is the children who attend MPS that face the consequences of our failed funding formula every day they enter our schools. Too many of our students have been shuffled around due to staff cuts after third Friday because of declining enrollment. Too many of our students, especially at the elementary level, have lots access to educational programs such as the arts, music, physical education, foreign languages and library/computer under the current school funding formula. Also, our students who desperately need early reading and math intervention programs have lost access to these programs due to staff cuts under the current school funding formula. Too many of our students in grades 4th-12th are in classrooms that exceed 30-35 plus students, and only one teacher. One science teacher at Custer High School has over 50 students in one of her science labs.

The students of Milwaukee have suffered long enough under the current school funding formula. It is necessary for the Legislature to take on the difficult task of adopting a new school funding formula that does not punish school districts with declining enrollments and increasing property values. It is time that our school funding formula provides true equality in the way we fund our schools, so every child attending a Wisconsin Public School has access to and receive an excellent education.

In conclusion, I ask that you please vote in support of SJR27, because the students of Milwaukee Public Schools, and those attending districts with declining enrollment and decreasing state aid are in desperate need of the Legislature taking actions. The students of Wisconsin's public schools have been punished for too long, and it is time for our state to invest in our future.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Kelly McMahan
7926 N. 107th St. #11
Milwaukee, WI 53224



Sharon Locke
1923 Mars Avenue
Racine, WI 53404
Phone: 262-632-8544

SJR 27?

November 15, 2007

Dear Wisconsin Legislators:

I want the legislators to think about all of the mothers and grandmothers in the state of Wisconsin who struggle with a budget every day. Like you, they make budget choices that affect the education of their children. Every day children ask for money to pay for lunches, school supplies, clothes, gas, and a variety of daily expenses.

Legislators are faced with rising costs for basic needs on a much larger scale. Do your homework, study the state school formula, and provide the necessary funds to support each child's future.

And, by the way, don't skimp on education. Don't buy just one pencil when you know it won't last the year!

Children who have no voice here in this capitol are at their desks right now. Like me, mothers and grandmothers all over the state want to encourage their children to persevere and succeed.

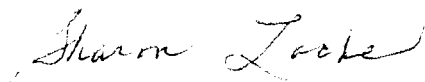
A short Story

When my daughter Adrianna made a permanent move from Wisconsin to Portland, Oregon, guess what she took with her on the plane? ...her violin!

I believe in supporting fine programs. Fine programs thought to be "frills" enrich the individual student and the community as a whole.

We know financial management cannot be achieved without good planning, so please do your part.

Sincerely,



Sharon Locke





Hi. My name is Jim Sturm.

My wife is Mary Jo Schiavoni who is on the list to speak for the ACLU. She had to leave in order to drive to Indianapolis today for business reasons and asked me to read this. Copies have already been submitted to members of the committee.

November 15, 2007

Wisconsin Senate Education Committee
Madison, WI

HAND DELIVERED

RE: Senate Joint Resolution 27

Dear Chairman Lehman and Education Committee Members:

I also have to leave now but just want to ensure that the committee is aware of the ACLU's strong support of Resolution 27 and that we made an effort to speak today. So you can remove us from the list with that understanding.

I am here on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin, which works to defend the rights and liberties guaranteed to all people in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States and the state of Wisconsin. Among its other actions, the ACLU of Wisconsin works to extend rights to those segments of our population that traditionally have been denied their rights, including children; people of color; people with disabilities; and the poor.

Thank you
Jim Sturm

Our concerns include ensuring that our state provides a meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education to all children in Wisconsin, regardless of race, income, ethnicity, or disability. In 2000, the Wisconsin Supreme Court defined the contours of that constitutional right.

Wisconsin students have a fundamental right to an equal opportunity for a sound basic education. An equal opportunity for a sound basic education is one that will equip students for their roles as citizens and enable them to succeed economically and personally. The legislature has articulated a standard for equal opportunity for a sound basic education . . . as the opportunity for students to be proficient in mathematics, science, reading and writing, geography, and history, and for them to receive instruction in the arts and music, vocational training, social sciences, health, physical education and foreign language, in accordance with their age and aptitude. An equal opportunity for a sound basic education acknowledges that students and districts are not fungible and takes into account districts with disproportionate numbers of disabled students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with limited English language skills . . .

Vincent v. Voight, 614 N.W.2d 388, 396-7 (Wis. 2000).

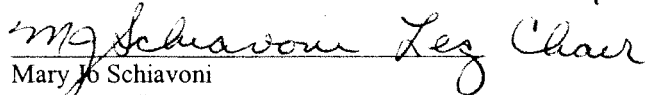
The Wisconsin constitution guarantees those rights and opportunities to each student in this state. Throughout Wisconsin, there are many, many dedicated teachers and administrators, and pupils eager to learn. Yet we also know that not all Wisconsin students have the meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education which our constitution requires. Not all students have access to all the course offerings - both academic and non-academic - required by law. Programs to aid low income students and other vulnerable populations are insufficient to meet the needs of all students who qualify for them, and too often ignore the needs of students who do not fall into a narrowly defined classification for a categorical eligibility problem. We see that already, too often, there is a lack of necessary resources to assist all students in meeting proficiency standards.

We understand that there is a budget crisis which has been building for years. Nevertheless,

it is the constitutional obligation of the state of Wisconsin to ascertain what programs, services and facilities are needed to help all students succeed; to ensure that adequate resources exist; and to distribute those resources in a manner that will guarantee a sound basic education for all students.

Rather than continue to drain resources from our classrooms, the Wisconsin legislature must take all possible steps to ensure that every child in Wisconsin has a full and meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education. We urge you to redouble your efforts to ensure a fair and adequate funding system statewide.

Respectfully submitted,


Mary Jo Schiavoni
Attorney at Law

On Behalf of:
American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin
207 E. Buffalo St., Ste. 325
Milwaukee, WI 53202



November 15, 2007

Wisconsin Senate Education Committee
Madison, WI

HAND DELIVERED

RE: *Senate Joint Resolution 27*

Dear Chairman Lehman and Education Committee Members:

I am here on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin, which works to defend the rights and liberties guaranteed to all people in this country by the Constitution and laws of the United States and the state of Wisconsin. Among its other actions, the ACLU of Wisconsin works to extend rights to those segments of our population that traditionally have been denied their rights, including children; people of color; people with disabilities; and the poor.

Our concerns include ensuring that our state provides a meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education to all children in Wisconsin, regardless of race, income, ethnicity, or disability. In 2000, the Wisconsin Supreme Court defined the contours of that constitutional right.

Wisconsin students have a fundamental right to an equal opportunity for a sound basic education. An equal opportunity for a sound basic education is one that will equip students for their roles as citizens and enable them to succeed economically and personally. The legislature has articulated a standard for equal opportunity for a sound basic education . . . as the opportunity for students to be proficient in mathematics, science, reading and writing, geography, and history, and for them to receive instruction in the arts and music, vocational training, social sciences, health, physical education and foreign language, in accordance with their age and aptitude. An equal opportunity for a sound basic education acknowledges that students and districts are not fungible and takes into account districts with disproportionate numbers of disabled students, economically disadvantaged students, and students with limited English language skills . . .

Vincent v. Voight, 614 N.W.2d 388, 396-7 (Wis. 2000).

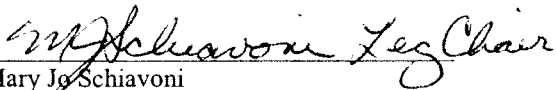
The Wisconsin constitution guarantees those rights and opportunities to each student in this state. Throughout Wisconsin, there are many, many dedicated teachers and administrators, and pupils eager to learn. Yet we also know that not all Wisconsin students have the meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education which our constitution requires. Not all students have access to all the course offerings - both academic and non-academic - required by law. Programs to aid low income students and other vulnerable populations are insufficient to meet the needs of all students who qualify for them, and too often ignore the needs of students who do not fall into a narrowly defined classification for a categorical eligibility problem. We see that already, too often, there is a lack of necessary resources to assist all students in meeting proficiency standards.

We understand that there is a budget crisis which has been building for years. Nevertheless,

it is the constitutional obligation of the state of Wisconsin to ascertain what programs, services and facilities are needed to help all students succeed; to ensure that adequate resources exist; and to distribute those resources in a manner that will guarantee a sound basic education for all students.

Rather than continue to drain resources from our classrooms, the Wisconsin legislature must take all possible steps to ensure that every child in Wisconsin has a full and meaningful opportunity for a sound basic education. We urge you to redouble your efforts to ensure a fair and adequate funding system statewide.

Respectfully submitted,


Mary Jo Schiavoni
Attorney at Law

On Behalf of:
American Civil Liberties Union of Wisconsin
207 E. Buffalo St., Ste. 325
Milwaukee, WI 53202



**Testimony at Hearing on
Senate Joint Resolution 27**

**By Larry Black, District Administrator
Wisconsin Heights School District
November 15, 2007**

Good (morning/afternoon). My name is Larry Black. I serve as the superintendent of the Wisconsin Heights School District, a district of 900 students in western Dane County.

With me today are Bob Avery, our director of business services; Mrs. Sue Beil, a board of education member; and Sue's husband, Mr. Marty Beil. The Beils are parents of two Wisconsin Heights graduates and a current senior.

I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify and to tell the Wisconsin Heights story.

Due to declining enrollments and a shrinking revenue cap, austerity has been the rule at Wisconsin Heights for many years. We face a cumulative deficit of 3.3 million dollars over the next five years, just to maintain existing programs and services. Our enrollment has dropped 26% in the last decade, and we project continued decline of another 25% over the next seven years.

Reductions in administrators, teachers, support staff, class offerings, student programs, school-based budgets and the district fund balance have been normal operating procedures in the district for the past several years.

This year alone, we implemented \$870,000 of budget cuts in a 10 million dollar budget, and spent monies from our fund balance for the third year in a row.

In the face of these challenges, last year our Board of Education authorized an operating referendum – the first ever in the history of our district.

We devoted countless hours to educating our community about the fiscal crisis we faced, and the need for a referendum to provide temporary relief.

Throughout the process, we detailed the long list of program cuts and staff layoffs that the district had implemented over the past several years.

Yet time and again, as we made our presentations at community forums, concerned citizens stood up and demanded of us a long term solution. And time and again, after we reviewed all the measures we had taken at the local level, we repeated the same refrain: the solution to the problems in local school funding MUST come from a change in the state funding formula.

Our referendum failed by a slim margin. As a result, even more program cuts were implemented this year. And due in large part to community concern over the ability of our district to offer a quality education in the face of declining revenues, we experienced the highest number of open enrollment applications in our district's history.

The referendum split our community in half, not only at the ballot box, but in a very real emotional way as well. It polarized our community, and pitted neighbor against neighbor, especially those with school-age children against those struggling to afford higher property taxes. Nasty and vicious personal, verbal and written attacks were made on people - good people – who had only the best interest of children at heart.

Those things make me leery about recommending to our board that we hold another referendum. However, that is what we must do, as our children deserve nothing less. But regardless of how a future referendum might turn out, unless the legislature of this state enacts meaningful and significant changes in how schools are funded, the Wisconsin Heights School District faces a continued decline and a diminished future that none of us want to see.

As part of my duties, I meet with the superintendents of the other Dane County school districts. At a meeting last spring, I made some notes about what was happening in these districts. For example....

- Waunakee offers foreign language beginning in first grade.
- Monona Grove is starting an International Baccalaureate program.
- Sun Prairie releases veteran teachers to serve as mentors for new teachers.
- Cambridge is extending on-line learning options through a charter school initiative.

When I hear about exciting new initiatives in surrounding districts, it's hard not to contrast them with the program cuts and erosion of opportunities that are standard operating procedures at Wisconsin Heights, and in districts just like Heights all across the state.

Erosion can happen slowly, or it can happen overnight. But when erosion occurs, you have to take action, or accept the inevitable consequences of being washed away.

That's what we face in Wisconsin Heights. Our referendum was an effort to fill sandbags and to place them in the breach of funding, so that programs for children were not washed away. While that first surge of erosion has occurred, it is not too late to return to the levees, but we need more and larger sandbags than ever before, and we need those sandbags to come through changes in our state statutes.

And so, I challenge this committee and the state legislature to approach their duties with this question in mind:

Do we accept erosion or do we insist on excellence?

Your collective answer as a state legislature will determine the quality of education across the state for years and decades to come.

While we wait for an answer to emerge at the state level, our dedicated staff members in Wisconsin Heights will continue to work diligently for the best interests of our children, because that's what we do. We meet the needs of children to the best of our abilities, and more sandbags or no sandbags, that is not about to stop.

This concludes my testimony. You will note that the written copies of this testimony include relevant supporting data regarding the fiscal crisis in the Wisconsin Heights School District.

Thank you for holding this hearing, and thank you for listening.

* * * * *

Note: this testimony and supporting documents will be posted on the Wisconsin Heights School District website on November 16, 2007 at <http://www.wisheights.k12.wi.us/>

WISCONSIN HEIGHTS SCHOOL DISTRICT
Enrollment, Revenue Limit and Budget Data
History and Projections
 11/14/2007

Year	CURRENT BUDGET PROJECTIONS (Includes new state funding formula change made in the State's 07-09 Biennial Budget)						Fund Balance			
	K-12 Enrollment		Revenue Limit		Expenditures		Surplus/(Deficit)			
	Number	% Change	Amount	% Change	Amount	% Change	Amount	% Change		
2002-03	1114		\$9,589,804		\$9,952,335		(\$86,100)		\$2,296,834	
2003-04	1049	-5.83%	\$9,671,880	0.86%	\$10,034,968	0.83%	\$333,285	-487.09%	\$2,600,304	13.21%
2004-05	1001	-4.58%	\$9,601,324	-0.73%	\$9,850,577	-1.84%	\$273,630	-17.90%	\$2,873,934	10.52%
2005-06	960	-4.10%	\$9,439,828	-1.68%	\$9,985,071	1.37%	(\$93,107)	-134.03%	\$2,780,827	-3.24%
2006-07	903	-5.94%	\$9,289,309	-1.59%	\$10,723,710	7.40%	(\$964,106)	935.48%	\$1,816,721	-34.67%
2007-08*	833	-7.75%	\$9,363,577	0.80%	\$9,946,384	-7.25%	(\$155,139)	-83.91%	\$1,661,582	-8.54%
2008-09	789	-5.28%	\$9,389,653	0.28%	\$10,145,132	2.00%	(\$308,233)	98.68%	\$1,353,349	-18.55%
2009-10	737	-6.59%	\$9,357,496	-0.34%	\$10,402,081	2.53%	(\$590,156)	91.46%	\$763,193	-43.61%
2010-11	708	-3.93%	\$9,341,545	-0.17%	\$10,708,815	2.95%	(\$905,510)	53.44%	(\$142,317)	-118.65%
2011-12	686	-3.11%	\$9,356,070	0.16%	\$11,115,807	3.80%	(\$1,290,494)	42.52%	(\$1,432,811)	906.77%
Net Change (02-03 to 11-12)		-38.42%		-2.44%		11.69%		1398.83%		-162.38%
Average Annual Change		-5.23%		-0.27%		1.31%		55.41%		78.14%

Year	PROJECTIONS UNDER THE OLD SCHOOL FUNDING FORMULA (Before changes included in State's 07-09 Biennial Budget)						Fund Balance			
	K-12 Enrollment		Revenue Limit		Expenditures		Surplus/(Deficit)			
	Number	% Change	Amount	% Change	Amount	% Change	Amount	% Change		
2002-03	1114		\$9,589,804		\$9,952,335		(\$86,100)		\$2,296,834	
2003-04	1049	-5.83%	\$9,671,880	0.86%	\$10,034,968	0.83%	\$333,285	-487.09%	\$2,600,304	13.21%
2004-05	1001	-4.58%	\$9,601,324	-0.73%	\$9,850,577	-1.84%	\$273,630	-17.90%	\$2,873,934	10.52%
2005-06	960	-4.10%	\$9,439,828	-1.68%	\$9,985,071	1.37%	(\$93,107)	-134.03%	\$2,780,827	-3.24%
2006-07	903	-5.94%	\$9,289,309	-1.59%	\$10,723,710	7.40%	(\$964,106)	935.48%	\$1,816,721	-34.67%
2007-08*	833	-7.75%	\$9,149,650	-1.50%	\$9,946,384	-7.25%	(\$369,064)	-61.72%	\$1,447,657	-20.31%
2008-09	789	-5.28%	\$9,073,123	-1.49%	\$10,145,132	2.00%	(\$684,763)	85.54%	\$762,894	-47.30%
2009-10	737	-6.59%	\$8,841,079	-1.91%	\$10,402,081	2.53%	(\$1,106,573)	61.60%	(\$343,679)	-145.05%
2010-11	708	-3.93%	\$8,691,990	-1.69%	\$10,708,815	2.95%	(\$1,555,065)	40.53%	(\$1,898,744)	452.48%
2011-12	686	-3.11%	\$8,578,996	-1.30%	\$11,115,807	3.80%	(\$2,067,568)	32.96%	(\$3,966,312)	108.89%
Net Change (02-03 to 11-12)		-38.42%		-10.54%		11.69%		2301.36%		-272.69%
Average Annual Change		-5.23%		-1.23%		1.31%		50.60%		37.17%

*NOTE: Beginning in 2007-08, the WHSD has added a Pre-K program. Enrollment for this is not included in the projections above, but has 56 students this year and we are projecting 55 students in all future years.





KATHLEEN VINEHOUT

STATE SENATOR

Thursday, November 15, 2007

Thank you Sen. Lehman and members of the Senate Education Committee for the opportunity to testify in favor of Senate Joint Resolution 27 which requires reform of the school aid formula to be enacted by July 2009.

It is time to get the job of reforming school funding done.

The Legislature has not completed its homework. We have studied the issue but we have not turned in our final assignment.

While the legislature has not completed its work, more and more school districts are running into severe financial difficulties. Ninety percent of the school superintendents across the state say the school funding system has to be significantly changed and I have spoken with many of them. Parents and taxpayers are frustrated by the inequities in the formula and the inadequacy of resources. An increasing number of schools, like those in my district, are running into severe financial difficulties forcing teacher layoffs, larger class sizes and reduced course offerings.

Let me tell you about one of my school districts.

Alma Center is facing serious budget cuts. This school district has already consolidated and last April lost a critically needed referendum to simply maintain current services. The school district administrator, the school board and the community are dealing with significant cuts on top of previous years cutbacks to programs and services. To address their budget crisis, the district sent layoff or hour reduction notices to 15 teachers. They also considered the following:

- Outsourcing the custodial services and letting go of the custodial staff
- Eliminating band and chorus for all grades
- Eliminating the gifted-talented program
- Eliminating foreign language courses
- Eliminating all extracurricular activities including sports, drama, forensics and other groups
- Cancelling all shop, tech education, mechanics and agriculture classes
- Charging fees for textbooks.

Such cuts threaten education equality and the ability of rural students to achieve.

Last year's annual survey of school district superintendents' reports: 70% of our 425 districts increased class size; 65% increased student fees; over 60% offered fewer courses and reduced programs for gifted and talented students; over 65% laid off teachers and support staff; and over half of the school districts reduced extracurricular programs and programs for at-risk students.

Educational opportunities are being limited at the same time schools are trying to meet increasing accountability of student achievement.

There are three major problems with the school funding system that have to be fixed:

- 1) There is a fundamental disconnect between what drives school district revenues and what drives school district costs. When three students leave from a class of 20, district revenues are automatically cut 15 percent – but the cost of teaching a class of 17 is almost the same as teaching a class of 20.
- 2) The school funding formula assumes that every student costs the same to educate regardless of background, capability, or language skills.
- 3) The school formula assumes every school district has the same cost structure regardless of whether it has 300 or 3000 students, and regardless of whether it covers 15 square miles or 150 square miles.

These three things work together to create severe financial problems particularly for smaller, rural districts with declining enrollments and increasing property values. Most of the schools in the 31st Senate District are affected.

My own school district of Alma leads the state in the declining enrollment. They are losing dollars faster than they can cut fixed costs. The district has worked very hard to avoid cutting programs. Alma shares staff and programs such as music, consumer education and psychologist arrangements with Pepin and Plum City school districts. The school district administrator said this was their secret to survival.

Pepin school district suffers disproportionately from a system that penalizes districts with higher than average equalized property values. Forty percent of students come from low-income families and more than 50% of the community is low-income. Under the current formula, Pepin is considered a wealthy community, and yet the majority of residents teeter at or below the poverty line.

Rural school districts are losing ground and face two choices: They must either spend more out of local resources to provide a basic educational program or be satisfied with more limited educational offerings. The reality is many of these districts are poor so the first option is not available to them. Sacrificing educational equity is NOT a choice.

If Wisconsin is going to uphold the right of all children to receive a high quality education, the state has to meet its commitment to funding two-thirds of the cost of schools. This level of state support will help reduce the budget crunch for schools and the burden on property taxpayers. But it does not address the long term inequities in the school funding formula.

School funding reform has to be a priority. We need to put aside partisan differences and work together to put forth a plan for real reform.

For the fundamental problems in school funding to be fixed, reform must accomplish these four things:

- Reduce our reliance on the property tax.
- Recognize that some students cost more to educate than others.
- Recognize that school districts in different situations face different costs.
- Be based on an adequacy study of real costs in specific circumstances.

This is not impossible. There have been a number of proposals made by different groups over a number of years. The information is there. What is missing is the commitment to finish the assignment. We need to make that commitment.

We cannot afford to let our schools go down:

Good schools prepare our children for productive lives.

Good schools make vibrant communities.

Good schools support a healthy economy.

We can do a better job funding schools and our goal must be to change the present funding system.

Thank you.