



JIM DOYLE
GOVERNOR
STATE OF WISCONSIN

April 29, 2005

TO THE HONORABLE MEMBERS OF THE ASSEMBLY:

I am vetoing AB 3 in its entirety. This bill increases the cap on the number of pupils that may participate in the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program from 15% of the enrollment in the Milwaukee Public Schools, which is estimated to be approximately 14,750 students in the 2005-06 school year, to 16,500 pupils beginning in 2005-06.

I have said repeatedly that I am willing to support a proposal to lift the Choice cap as long as it also addresses the needs of the vast majority of Milwaukee children who attend public schools. I believe that adjustments to the school choice cap should only be made in the context of a broader effort to improve education for ALL students. AB 3 does nothing to improve the quality of education in Milwaukee's public schools. This bill helps a few students at the expense of many – and at the expense of property taxpayers. Unfortunately, many in the Legislature who have been the most vocal proponents of expanding school choice have also been the strongest opponents of measures that would help all students, such as investing in smaller class sizes and four-year-old kindergarten.

Further, I am vetoing this bill because it would have negative financial implications for the state, hurt Milwaukee taxpayers, and drain resources from children in Milwaukee Public Schools. For example, if 1,500 additional pupils enter the Choice Program as a result of the bill, state costs would increase by \$4.9 million, property taxes in Milwaukee would increase by \$2.3 million, and revenues for educating children in Milwaukee would be reduced by up to \$13.5 million. These changes are contrary to my efforts to provide property tax relief that maintains our commitment to educate all of our children.

Finally, I am vetoing AB 3 because it does not provide a long-term solution to the allocation of seats in the program if the new cap is reached next year or in the future. Last year, the Department of Public Instruction proposed a reasonable and workable solution to this issue, one that would have given preference to existing students in the Choice program and their siblings. That solution was rejected by the Joint Committee for the Review of Administrative Rules, which opted to create a crisis rather than craft a solution.

In vetoing this bill, I also repeat my offer: Let's work together to craft a broad, meaningful, long-term solution that improves educational opportunities for all Milwaukee schoolchildren, whether they attend Choice schools or public schools.

Respectfully Submitted,

JIM DOYLE
Governor