

Governor Jim Doyle
P.O.Box 7863
Madison, WI 53707

Dear Governor Doyle,

The Pecatonica PTA represents parents and teachers from the Pecatonica Area Schools who want the best education for our children. The public schools in Wisconsin are in crisis due to way that they are funded and our children's education is being compromised. Unless we do something now, it will continue to get worse. We expect you to stand up for our children as you have in the past and have promised to do in the future.

The Pecatonica PTA in partnership with the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES) is very concerned about our schools after more than a decade of strangling revenue caps. Our school district was fiscally conservative before the revenue caps were in place, so there never was much to cut. We are a rural school and the first programs to get cut were Industrial Arts and Family and Consumer Education. Thirteen years later, we have very little in the way of daycare in our area, so people take their kids to Madison or Monroe to work with them and take them to daycare in another community. Those same people put their kids in private 4 yr old Kindergarten programs, then decide to open enroll out of our district. Our school is trying to find money for 4 yr old Kindergarten, but we don't know if it will happen. So we are losing students as a penalty. These same people do not shop, buy gas, eat out or seek entertainment in our community.

As revenue caps have tightened our school's funds, we have lost several teachers and staff. We have a bare minimum of class offerings, to the point where we had to add some electives because the cost of the Youth Options was more expensive than added staff time.

Our school has always done a good job of making the best of what we have, but this is not giving our kids the same opportunities as students in more prosperous school districts. There is little money for field trips or projects that make learning more interesting to students. They miss the valuable experience of visiting the Capitol building, seeing a museum or visiting unique places.

We would like to see the categorical aid to schools increased even over the proposed DPI budget. The Wisconsin PTA, as a partner with WAES, would like to see the following increases in the biennial budget:
Transportation--\$97.7 million
Bilingual Programs-- \$54.6 million
Special Education-- \$898.7 million
SAGE PLUS-- \$380.3 million (This would fund the same as the DPI budget with an additional \$300 per year per lunch-subsidized student.)
Sparsity-- \$26.5 million

These increases are desperately needed to stop the bleeding in public schools, but even this is only a bandage. A total reform of the school funding formula is needed soon to help schools fully recover from the fiscal problems that are causing this educational crisis.

The amount of money needed is large but can be obtained by removing some of the non-food or medicine sales tax exemptions. There are also many loopholes in the corporate tax structure that could be closed to shift the tax burden off of individuals.

As a partner with WAES, the Pecatonica PTA is committed to fighting for increased categorical aid to address the critical short-term needs in all school districts. At the same time, we urge you to work with us, with other education stakeholders, and with the Legislature to begin comprehensive reform of the school-funding system in 2007.

Sincerely,

Jill Gaskell
Pecatonica PTA President
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