

January 30, 2007

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

Dear Governor Doyle:

During your brief visit to Door County last summer it is understandable that your busy schedule did not allow you to visit little Washington Island. However, little Washington Island is faced with a big problem.

Because of high property values and declining enrollment, the Washington Island School District receives funding from the state totaling something in the neighborhood of \$209 per student (we receive no equalization aid). The total cost of educating a student on Washington Island approaches \$15,111. You will note that \$209 is approximately 1.3% of this total cost. This is a far cry from the 2/3 State funding goal stated in both your administration and campaign.

We as a school district are regularly forced to go to referendum (this year we will be asking the voters for \$280,000) in order to attempt to maintain the status quo. Passage of these referenda is made exceedingly difficult each year because of this disparity in state funding. Washington Island is already funding 87% of the cost of our little school district through local dollars (grants and other sources fund the balance).

The year round residents of Washington Island are far from rich in spite of high property values and although they have graciously passed unpopular referenda in the past (by very narrow margins), this is made even less palatable due to the amount of property tax dollars that we send to an apparently unchecked technical college system that benefits us little if at all.

When it comes to the education of our children, Washington Island has very few options due to geographic and economic conditions. For the very reason that Washington Island contributes significantly to the State's tourism economy, the 4.5 miles of water that separate us from the mainland make consolidation with other schools difficult at best.

The future economic stability of Washington Island (and to a lesser extent Door County) is linked to the survival of our school system and school funding reform is critical to that survival. While Washington Island's situation may be more critical and more desperate because of scale and location, it is certainly not the only school system affected by inequitable school funding. Our state representatives have attempted to help alleviate our situation with proposals for categorical aid that have fallen largely on deaf ears. In spite of this, we are grateful for their support.

We appreciate your support of the children of the great State of Wisconsin but urge you to remember that one size does not fit all when it comes to school funding as you keep in mind the students and residents of little Washington Island.

We would welcome a visit or discussion at any time

Sincerely,

The Board of Education  
Washington Island, WI 54246