



Wisconsin Alliance  
for Excellent Schools

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## **Budget Plan Cripples Schools and Communities**

Parents of Wisconsin school children should be alarmed by the budget plan approved Wednesday by the Republican-dominated Joint Finance Committee. The committee's action cuts educational support for kids, reduces all schools' capacity to meet state and federal laws, shortchanges basic community services, and takes away local taxpayer control, according to the Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES), a statewide coalition working for school-finance reform.

This is a deceptive political maneuver. Under the pretense of increasing state aid to public education, the plan would actually slash school spending by well over \$300 million in the next two years, compared with Gov. Doyle's budget proposal. This is because the additional state aid that Joint Finance promises schools is accompanied by a drastic cut of \$373 in per-student school revenue increases over the next two years.

This cut in revenue limits translates into more than \$36 million in cuts for Milwaukee Public Schools, more than \$9 million for Madison, and proportionally large cuts for every district in the state, including more than \$7 million for Racine, \$5 million for Appleton, \$3 million for Wausau, \$1 million for Superior and Antigo, \$400,000 for Phillips, and \$100,000 for tiny White Lake. Detailed estimates for every school district are available from the Legislative Fiscal Bureau.

The plan would also devastate four-year-old kindergarten, undermine the successful SAGE program for class-size reduction, eliminate aid for drivers' ed, and give false hope to parents of students with disabilities by making tiny increases in special-education funding while dramatically cutting overall school spending.

The proposal also would expand the use of public dollars to fund private schools in the Milwaukee voucher program. While WAES has no position on vouchers in general, it opposes expansion at a time when state support for public schools is being cut.

In addition, the proposed freeze on local and state government activity would cripple the ability of government units to provide a range of necessary services. The Joint Finance plan weakens Wisconsin's long tradition of local control and hinders the state's prospects for economic rebound.

It is critical that the Legislature defeat the Joint Finance plan. Wisconsin schools cannot absorb more reductions in funding and still comply with state and federal mandates. The federal No Child Left Behind act requires additional programming, adding to the cost of operating schools.

WAES members are committed to long-term structural reform of the way Wisconsin funds schools, based on Adequacy principles, under which a school-finance system would be aligned with educational goals and the resources needed to attain those goals.

WAES' core principles – reflecting the need for structural reform of the system along Adequacy lines – have been endorsed by nearly 60 organizations, including school boards, parent groups, unions, and civic and religious organizations.

For more information, contact Jack Norman at the Institute for Wisconsin's Future, 414-384-9094 or 414-339-8936. The Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools website is: <http://www.excellentschools.org>