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Wisconsin Alliance  
for Excellent Schools

## **“A Penny for Kids” - Why not Wisconsin?**

FORT ATKINSON, WI—Voters in Arizona and legislators in Kansas recently moved across party lines, heading off dangerous cuts to public schools by approving a one cent increase in sales tax. The Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES) is now asking, “Why can’t we do the same thing for our kids and their futures”

Voters in Wisconsin are behind the “A Penny for Kids” movement, but need someone in the state government to step forward, do the right thing, and put a one cent sales tax increase on the legislative agenda. “A Penny for Kids” is a WAES project.

“We have seen citizens and lawmakers in other states join together to come up with a solution to the funding crisis facing public schools,” said Thomas Beebe, WAES executive director. “There is no reason why Wisconsin should not be among the states standing up for education.”

On May 18, Arizona voters passed a resolution to raise the state's sales tax by one penny by a 64-36 percent margin. Earlier this month, Kansas's Republican-controlled state legislature passed a similar measure.

Beebe said WAES stands with Jan Brewer, Arizona’s Republican governor, who told state voters, “Doing the right thing almost always means doing the hard thing, and today, you the hard thing.”

WAES -- a non-profit coalition of organizations, individuals, educator groups, and school districts from across the state -- is advocating for a similar tax increase to fill the gap in public school funding created by the 2009-2011 state budget. The measure would raise over \$800 million annually.

For over 15 years, Wisconsin’s school-funding system has resulted in the state paying a declining share of educational costs. “Now, the state has actually cut aid to our kids’ schools,” Beebe said. That means that not only has the quantity and quality of education diminished, but property taxes have actually increased.

“With the last budget cycle, the state has backed away from its promise to fund two-thirds of education and has shifted the burden onto local property tax payers,” said Beebe. “As a result, the educational future of students all over Wisconsin has been threatened and the war between children and property taxpayers has been ratcheted up.”

“We definitely need to change the state’s school-funding system,” Beebe said. “The patient needs a transplant. Unfortunately, that patient is bleeding to death. ‘A Penny for Kids’ is the transfusion we need to keep the patient alive until our elected officials can deliver the transplant.”

For more information on WAES, go to <http://www.excellentschools.org>. To learn more about the coalition's vision for a one-cent sales tax increase to fund public schools\_and to find out what you can do to spread the message, including signing a petition\_visit <http://www.apennyforkids.org>.

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