

February 1, 2007

Contact: Tom Beebe, Institute for Wisconsin's Future
414-384-9094



Wisconsin Alliance
for Excellent Schools

WAES letter-writing campaign: Dear Governor Doyle ...

From Glidden to Cuba City and Waukesha to Superior, school board members, parents, senior citizens, children's advocates, and other education stakeholders have contacted the Governor with the same message: Our schools are in trouble and we need increased school funding now and comprehensive school-funding reform in the near future.

Organizations and individuals from throughout Wisconsin—working together as *Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools* (WAES)—coordinated a letter-writing campaign to the Governor as he prepares his 2007-09 budget.

According to Project ABC Waukesha organizer Ruth Page Jones, “WAES partner organizations sent scores of letters to the Governor to make sure his budget includes enough state aid so that districts can take a breath and stop laying off staff, increasing class sizes, cutting vital programs and services, and holding costly and divisive referenda. More importantly, we have told Gov. Doyle that we’re ready, willing, and able to work with him and the Legislature to fix Wisconsin’s school-funding system as soon as possible.”

In her own district of Waukesha, Page Jones stated that children are facing \$3.4 million in program and service cuts next year alone. Vital programs such as gifted and talented, elementary guidance, and elementary library media specialists are threatened. This is in addition to the almost \$10 million in reductions the school district has made over the past decade.

School finance analyst Jack Norman from the Institute for Wisconsin’s Future states, “The gap between the cost to continue K-12 education and the local capacity to meet these expenses increases each year is growing. The most striking example was in the Florence County School District where, last year, the school board voted to dissolve the district because there was no longer sufficient revenue to provide quality education.”

Dan Brereton, School Board President of Florence County explained in his letter that nothing is improving despite passage of a referendum. “The Board struggles to provide Advance Placement classes for gifted students and necessary staff for children identified with a cognitive impairment.”

The Janesville Area PTA Council said that despite a successful referendum, program and service cuts continue, and district residents are angry and confused: “Now the School District of Janesville’s school board is preparing to cut another \$2 million dollars from its annual operating budget.” They do not understand the way public schools are funded, she said, They do not understand that if the referendum passed or failed the school district would still be facing large cuts in programs and services.

—more—

Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools
1717 South 12th Street #203 Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53204-3300
phone 414-384-9094 fax 414-384-9098
E-mail: info@excellentschools.org <http://www.excellentschools.org>

Senior citizens support a funding reform system that will both maintain good schools and reduce the over reliance on home owners' property taxes. According to the letter of the Dane County SOS Senior Council, "As taxpayers and renters we want to see continued academic excellence, but we cannot afford the increases in property taxes ... A change must be made in the way we are taxed for academic and vocational education."

The coalition will now turn its attention to both the 2007-09 budget process and comprehensive reform efforts.

"A resolution is circulating in the Capitol to change the way we fund our schools," Jones said. "We intend to do everything possible to encourage legislators to get behind it." The resolution commits the Legislature to changing the present system by July 1, 2009. Its chief sponsors are Rep. Sody Pope-Roberts (D-Verona) and Sen. Roger Breske (D-Eland).

WAES is a statewide, broad-based, diverse coalition of school districts and school boards, teachers' unions, parent groups, civic and faith-based organizations, and individuals working with state government to change the way Wisconsin funds public education.

—30—

Editors and reporters: Letters from the following school districts and organizations can be found at <http://www.excellentschools.org/events/2007-09Budget/07BudgetLetters.htm>

Baraboo School District	AFT Wisconsin
Benton School District	Appleton Education Association
Birchwood School District	Eau Claire Education Association
Butternut School District	Madison Teachers Inc.
Cameron School District	Northern Tier Uniserv
Columbus School District	West Central Education Association
Crandon School District	
Cuba City School District	Dane County SOS Senior Council
Evansville School District	Disability Rights Wisconsin
Florence County School District	Grassroots Waukesha County
Glidden School District	Institute for Wisconsin's Future
Lake Holcombe School District	Japanese American Citizens League
Marinette School District	League of Women Voters
Markesan School District	NAACP, Milwaukee Branch
Mellen School District	Racine Interfaith Council
Milwaukee School District	Save Our School LaPointe (Bayfield)
Minocqua J1 School District	Wisconsin Association of Asian Americans
Oconto Falls School District	Wisconsin Association of School Nurses
Park Falls School District	Wisconsin Rural Challenge
Phillips School District	
Rhineland School District	Cochrane-Fountain City PTO
Stevens Point School District	Janesville Area PTA Council
Superior School District	Pecatonica School District PTA
Three Lakes School District	Price County Citizens Who CARE
Tri County School District	Project ABC Waukesha
Washington Island School District	RVreferendum.org (Spring Green)
Weyerhauser School District	Wisconsin PTA
Waukesha School District (not WAES partner)	Stevens Point Student Senate

Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools
1717 South 12th Street #203 Milwaukee, Wisconsin 53204-3300
phone 414-384-9094 fax 414-384-9098
E-mail: info@excellentschools.org <http://www.excellentschools.org>