

# School-funding update for the week of August 20

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The Wisconsin Alliance for Excellent Schools (WAES) is a statewide, independent, membership-based organization of educators, school board members, students, parents, community leaders, researchers, citizens, and community activists whose lone goal is the comprehensive reform of Wisconsin's school-funding system. If you would like more information about the organization -- or on becoming part of WAES -- contact Tom Beebe at 920-650-0525 or [tbeebe@wisconsinsfuture.org](mailto:tbeebe@wisconsinsfuture.org).

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## **Wausaukee passes referendum but dissolution process continues**

The third try was a charm in the Wausaukee School District where voters overwhelmingly approved a referendum, Tuesday, to exceed state-imposed revenue caps by \$675,000 for a period of 10 years (<http://www.ehextra.com/main.asp?SectionID=12&SubSectionID=35&ArticleID=2056>). There was a large turn-out at the six district voting locations and the final vote was 1,234 to 674.

With district taxpayers finally approving a referendum, it will now be up to the School Boundary Appeal Board (a body created by the Department of Public Instruction) to affirm or deny dissolution of the school district. The Wausaukee School Board had earlier voted to dissolve the district. Superintendent Jan Dooley, speaking to the board last week, said Tuesday's vote would make a difference.

The first meeting of the Boundary Appeal Board will be on Tuesday, Aug. 26, from 1-4 p.m. and again from 6:30 to 9:30 p.m. in the school auditorium. Other hearings are scheduled for Sept. 30 or Oct 1 and Nov. 11 or Nov. 12. A decision is expected no later than Jan. 15.

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## **WAES talks to candidates about school-funding reform**

It is important that candidates for the Wisconsin Legislature -- as they prepare for the November 2008 election -- understand how important school-funding reform is to their constituents and possible constituents. One way WAES can help that happen is to make sure candidate forums are held (see next story). Also, WAES is contacting candidates directly.

The first of six reports on school-funding reform was mailed, Aug. 20, to all candidates for the Assembly and Senate. The reports talk about the negative impact of the present finance scheme on children and communities, the problems with the scheme, how to change the way Wisconsin funds public schools, and how to fund reform. In this way, candidates will know there is an answer to a serious problem that threatens the security and opportunities of children and communities all over Wisconsin.

As they are mailed to the candidates, the reports will be posted on the WAES website at

<http://www.wisconsinsfuture.org>. The first report -- "Our children are losing their futures" -- will be available on Monday, Aug. 25.

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## **Let WAES know if you have a candidate forum scheduled**

Republican or Democrat or Independent, it doesn't matter -- the upcoming election season is critical to any chances for school-funding reform. Every seat in the Assembly and half of those in the Senate are up for grabs, and every candidate must know he or she will be held responsible for fixing the crisis surrounding the funding of Wisconsin's public schools.

The best way to do that is through a candidate forum, so check out the calendar in this update or, regularly, on the WAES website to find the forum near you.

We want to make sure everyone interested in school-funding reform is aware of events around the state and, especially, in their area. If your organization is holding a forum, let me know. If you are aware of a forum, let me know that, too. WAES will make sure your event is advertised both in this e-mail update and on the WAES website. Whether the event is just about school-funding reform or whether it is covering a full range of public policy, it needs to be publicized.

If your group or organization would like to get involved in the school-funding reform effort by hosting a candidate forum, contact Tom Beebe, WAES (<http://www.excellentschools.org>) executive director, at 920-650-0525 or [beebe@wisconsinsfuture.org](mailto:beebe@wisconsinsfuture.org) for more information. You can also use this same contact information to post a forum to the e-mail or website calendars.

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## **Is another referendum in the future for Madison schools?**

New Superintendent Dan Nerad, Aug. 18, unveiled a plan to attack the projected budget shortfalls in the Madison Metropolitan School District (<http://www.madison.k12.wi.us/>) through a referendum that raises more money and uses accounting measures that would actually lower local property taxpayers' bills (<http://www.madison.com/wsj/topstories/301231>).

The plan calls for a series of tax increases (as a result of the referendum), phased in over three years, that would allow the district to permanently exceed state revenue limits by \$13 million a year. Nerad wants the vote on the Nov. 4 ballot. Lower property tax bills, the district says, would result from accounting changes such as drawing \$2 million from a \$2.2 million balance in Fund 80, money that provides for community and after-school programs. Also, the superintendent proposed budget cuts that would help to trim a \$3 million budget gap expected in the 2009-10 school year even if the referendum passes.

In general, the plan met with positive reaction from the school board. Lucy Mathiak gave the proposal a "bravo" and Beth Moss said she was "thrilled" by aspects of the plan and added, "I don't see that we've got any choice but to go to the taxpayers."

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## **Students learn hard lesson in school budgeting**

There's enough money in the Cheatham County school budget (Tennessee) to run the buses until February. After that, all bets are off. One mother said, "That's a long walk. What are (the kids) going to do?"

According to MSNBC.com, that could be the same question asked in school districts across the country, including in Wisconsin. "As 56 million children return to public schools in the coming days and weeks, they

are getting a real-world lesson in economics (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26012346/from/ET/>). "Ninety-nine percent of 546 local superintendents surveyed recently by the American Association of School Administrators said rising costs and shrinking budgets are hurting their school systems.

Association President Randall Collins said, "While school districts are working hard to limit programming cuts, the sharp increase in costs will have a negative impact on children, especially disadvantaged children, unless the states and federal government act quickly to provide relief."

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## **It's easy to join WAES and the school-funding reform effort**

It's now easier than ever to become a member of WAES. Just go to <http://www.excellentschools.org/about/join.htm>, fill out the membership statement, send it in, and pay your dues online. It's that simple to help improve the educational opportunities for every child in Wisconsin.

We need new members to not only increase our strength as an organization but to help with WAES' expenses as we take the school-funding reform message to communities all over the state. WAES has a proven track record of reaching far and wide, but it is through a strategy that involves a great deal of time and effort.

Your commitment to WAES and to school-funding reform is needed now ... more than ever. If you haven't joined already, now is the time. To get the dues structure for organizations -- or for more information -- contact Tom Beebe at 920-650-0525 or [tbeebe@wisconsinsfuture.org](mailto:tbeebe@wisconsinsfuture.org).

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## **Janesville board split over \$1 million in school budget cuts**

The Janesville School Board meets on Aug. 26 to settle a debate that started, Aug. 12, over the possibility of another \$1 million in budget cuts brought on by Wisconsin's school-funding system (<http://gazetteextra.com/news/2008/aug/13/budget-cuts-discussed-decision-coming-two-weeks/>).

One of the largest items on the list, \$281,000 in maintenance projects, was labeled by Superintendent Tom Evert as "far and away my biggest concern." What specific supplies, equipment, services, travel, or training will be cut will be discussed at the next meeting.

The cuts had board members divided. Peggy Sheridan, referring to recent economic setbacks in Janesville, said the cuts would adversely affect students and "now is the time to show (the community) we have a great district." On the other hand, Tim Cullen said the list would have no direct impact on students and "the bottom line is cutting the tax levy ... "

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**Help us better serve you by letting us know when you change your e-mail address. In that way we can stop sending the update to the old one and switch over to the new address as soon as possible.**

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## **School-funding reform calendar**

- August 22 -- 49th Assembly District (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/pubs/almanac/sd17.pdf>) candidate forum, *Breakfast with the Candidates* (<http://www.platteville.com/specialevents/Legislator%202008%20Breakfast%20flyer%20draft.pdf>), 7 a.m., Platteville Rooms, Pioneer Student Center, University of Wisconsin-Platteville (<http://www.uwplatt.edu/>), sponsored by the Government Affairs Committee of the Platteville Area Chamber of Commerce (<http://www.platteville.com/>)

- August 26 -- 1st Assembly District (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/pubs/almanac/sd1.pdf>) candidate forum, 6:30 p.m., at the Sturgeon Bay City Hall, 421 Michigan Street (<http://www.sturgeonbaywi.org/>), sponsored by the League of Women voters of Door and Kewaunee Counties
- August 26 -- 97th Assembly District (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/pubs/almanac/sd33.pdf>) candidate forum at 7 p.m., at St. Luke's Lutheran Church, 200 Carroll Street, Waukesha (behind Waukesha Public Library; <http://true456.youthsite.org/>), sponsored by SOPHIA (<http://www.gamaliel.org/Sophia/about.htm>)
- September 3 -- School-funding reform presentation for the West Allis-West Milwaukee PTA Council (<http://www.wawmptacouncil.info>), 6:30 p.m., at Parkway, 2930 South Root River Parkway in West Allis
- September 4 -- School-funding reform presentation for the Jefferson County Democratic Party (<http://www.jeffdems.org/default.htm>), 7 p.m., at 218 Wisconsin Drive, Jefferson
- October 2 -- School-funding reform presentation as part of the annual conference of the Wisconsin Association of Talented and Gifted (<http://www.watg.org/>), 1:15 to 2:30 p.m. in the Island Room at the Blue Harbor Resort (<http://www.blueharborresort.com/>), Sheboygan (<http://ci.sheboygan.wi.us/>)
- October 8 -- School-funding reform candidate forum, 7 p.m., at Nathan Hale High School ([http://www.wawm.k12.wi.us/Our%20Schools/Hale\\_Folder/Hale.htm](http://www.wawm.k12.wi.us/Our%20Schools/Hale_Folder/Hale.htm)) in the West Allis-West Milwaukee School District; (<http://www.wawm.k12.wi.us/>), sponsored by the West Allis-West Milwaukee PTA Council; more details as they become available
- October 9 -- School-funding forum for candidates in the 34th Assembly District and 12th Senate District (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/pubs/almanac/sd12.pdf>), 7 p.m. in the Lakeland Unified High School (<http://www.luhs.k12.wi.us/>) auditorium, Minocqua (<http://minocqua.org/>), sponsored by the Northwoods Alliance for School Funding Reform
- October 15 -- School-funding forum for candidates in the 51st Assembly District (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/pubs/almanac/sd17.pdf>), 7 p.m. in the Blanchardville Public Library (<http://www.swls.org/member.br.html>), sponsored by the Pecatonica School District (<http://www.pecatonica.k12.wi.us/>) PTA
- October 15 -- School-funding reform presentation, 7 p.m., at the Neshkoro Elementary School (<http://www.westfield.k12.wi.us/nes/default.htm>), Westfield School District (<http://www.westfield.k12.wi.us/>), 114 East Park Street, Neshkoro, sponsored by the Neshkoro Elementary School PTO (<http://www.westfield.k12.wi.us/nes/pto/default.htm>) and the Westfield School District Vision Committee
- October 23 -- 8th Senate District (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/pubs/almanac/sd8.pdf>) candidate forum, co-sponsored by the Whitefish Bay Advocates for Education (<http://www.advocatesforeducation.org/>) and the Alliance for Strong Mequon-Thiensville Schools (<http://www.mtalliance.org/>), 7 p.m., at the Schlitz Audobon Nature Center (<http://www.schlitzauduboncenter.com/>), 1111 East Brown Deer Road, Bayside
- October 29 -- 22nd Senate and 66th Assembly districts (<http://www.legis.state.wi.us/lrb/pubs/almanac/sd22.pdf>) candidate forum, 7:45 to 9 p.m., Somers Town Hall, 7512 12th Street, Somers, sponsored by Somers Informed Voters
- October 30 -- School-funding reform presentation as part of the annual AFT-Wisconsin (<http://www.aft-wisconsin.org/>) Convention, Wyndham Milwaukee Airport Hotel and Convention center (<http://www.wyndham.com/hotels/MKEAP/main.wnt>), 4747 South Howell Avenue, Milwaukee
- November 14 -- School-funding reform presentation at the Wisconsin School Social Workers Association Fall Conference (<http://www.wsswa.org>) at the Heidel House near Green Lake (<http://www.heidelhouse.com/>)

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