

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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CONTACT:
Representative Steve Doyle: 608-266-0631
Representative Jill Billings: 608-266-5780
Representative Peter Barca: 608-266-5504

Vouchers in Budget Will Hurt Public Education

The Joint Finance Committee of the Wisconsin Legislature will be voting soon on Governor Walker's budget proposal to increase taxpayer funding for private voucher schools by \$94 million. This represents a 29% increase while the budget freezes spending for public schools districts.

The Assembly Democratic Leader Peter Barca (D-Kenosha) came to the La Crosse area to help lead the opposition to this increased funding of voucher schools along with Rep. Steve Doyle (D-Onalaska) and Jill Billings (D-La Crosse). "Our last budget included the largest cuts to public education in Wisconsin history," said Barca. "Now the Governor wants to increase funding on unaccountable private voucher schools and expand the program while continuing to shortchange public schools," Barca said.

The increase in voucher funding could not have come at a worse time for the local schools in La Crosse County. "Our districts are already struggling to make ends meet with the funding they currently receive from the state. In the Onalaska school district for instance, the average student receives \$4,709 in state aid which is \$1,734 less than the amount received by the average voucher students," said Doyle.

"The state budget should not include controversial policy proposals which instead should be brought forward with proper debate," commented Billings. "My constituents have many concerns about the plan to expand voucher schools statewide and how it will adversely affect the La Crosse School Districts budget." Projections show that La Crosse and Eau Claire are currently on the verge of eligibility for the voucher expansion.

The Legislators pointed out that we cannot keep decreasing the funds for public schools and expect them to be able to compete with these taxpayer supported voucher schools. "It is especially unfair when one considers that private voucher schools are not bound by the same rules and standards as our public schools," Doyle said. "Taxpayers are being asked to write a blank check with no assurances that these school will perform," said Barca. "In the coming weeks, I hope the Joint Finance Committee will also be asking the question of why Wisconsin taxpayers should expand the voucher program," added Billings.