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### **Sparsity Aid Passes Assembly**

MADISON – This week, State Representative Steve Doyle (D-Onalaska) supported legislation to increase aid to rural and low-spending school districts in Wisconsin. Known as Assembly Bill 835, this proposal passed the Assembly on a wide bipartisan vote.

Under the bill, beginning in 2018-19, school districts that qualify for sparsity aid would receive \$100 more per student than they currently get. The bill would also increase the low revenue ceiling from the current threshold of \$9,100 per pupil to \$9,400 and increase it by \$100 each year after until 2022-23.

Sparsity aid is a category of funding that is given to schools with 745 students or less and a district density of less than 10 pupils per square mile. Typically, rural and smaller districts are eligible for this supplementary funding.

“With the Bangor School District, the sparsity aid increase in this bill means a \$60,000 boost in state funding,” said Doyle. “To put that in perspective, it is roughly a 1/3rd increase of all the state aid they receive. To a district like Bangor, this increase is huge.”

All school districts in Wisconsin currently have revenue limits that constrain their abilities to repair aging buildings, purchase new school buses and hire new teachers. With the adjustment of the low revenue limit in AB 835, schools will be able to relieve the significant financial strain that they have been operating under due to recent cuts to public education.

“For the Onalaska School District, this bill will result in an additional \$300,000 per year for school operations,” said Doyle. “For the West Salem School District, it will be \$119,456 or the cost of two beginning level teachers.”

“Even with this increase in funding, many of our schools are still struggling to make ends meet,” noted Doyle. “We still have a long way to go to ensure that our districts have the resources they need to educate the next generation of Wisconsinites, but I believe this bill is a good step in that direction.”

Assembly Bill 835 and its companion Senate Bill 690 now go to the Senate for a vote before heading to the Governor’s desk to be signed into law.

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