



90th Assembly District
REP. KARL VAN ROY

Legislative Update

March 31, 2006

Education: Investing in Wisconsin's Future

Making Wisconsin schools, colleges and universities the best in the country, and the world, is an integral part of keeping our state strong. Great schools help to give kids the right start in life, and a solid technical college and university system will ensure that Wisconsin residents get the job training they need to compete in the twenty-first century economy. By investing financially and intellectually in the future of Wisconsin's education system, we are also investing in Wisconsin residents and the state itself. Here are a few of the measures the legislature passed this session to make sure Wisconsin education is the best it can be.

K-12 Funding: An Historic Increase

Education is the state's number one spending priority. Period. Wisconsin spends a greater percentage of its budget on education than nearly any other state. This year, the legislature took Wisconsin's traditional commitment to education funding to a whole new level by providing the largest dollar increase to school aid in state history.

Overall, the state budget allocated \$13.1 billion in aid to public schools, technical colleges and the University of Wisconsin system. Of that, more than \$11.52 billion will go to K-12 education. That means funding for K-12 students will increase \$120 and \$100 per pupil over the next two school years respectively. For a class of 20 students, that translates into \$4,400 of additional funding each year.

Under this increase, Wisconsin is spending more on education than it ever has before. I was proud to support this funding because Wisconsin students are among the best in the nation. They are worth the investment.

In the Classroom: Class Size and Safe Schools

Even though funding is important, it takes more than money to build a great education system. No matter how many dollars go to educate each pupil, students can't learn in a classroom stuffed with people or in a learning environment that is not safe. That is why I supported AB 1057, which reduces class sizes in the early grades, and AB 284, which allows school boards to keep convicted felons from working in our schools.

AB 1057: Class Size

Class size is one of the most important issues in education. Studies have shown time and time again that the more personal attention a student receives, the better he or she does. Personal attention is particularly important for young students, who are just starting to develop in their academic careers and who often require help with activities beyond mere classroom instruction. By providing \$25 million for smaller class sizes in grades K-3, AB 1057 will help put young students in smaller classes and will help them receive the attention they need to

succeed. AB 1057 is available for scheduling in the Senate.

AB 284: School Safety

Beyond providing a high quality academic experience, the primary objective of any school district is to keep its children safe. That is why I also supported AB 284. The bill gives school boards the authority to keep convicted felons from working in our schools. I voted for AB 284 because schools should have the discretion to decide who is safe to work in an environment with their children. By passing this bill, we are giving school boards the power they need to keep their communities safe. AB 284 passed the Assembly and has been referred to the Senate Committee on Judiciary, Corrections and Privacy.

Focus on Curriculum: Special Education, Gifted and Talented Programs, and Math and Science Classes

Every student is unique, and we want to make sure that our school system strives to meet the needs of every child that comes through its doors. We also want to make sure that we challenge Wisconsin students and prepare them to compete in a global economy. Four measures that address special education, gifted and talented programs, and stronger math and science requirements do just that.

Act 25 and Act 220: Special Education

Along with an historic increase in education funding comes a commitment to making sure all students benefit from additional resources. Act 25 increases funding for special education programs and creates a new program for children who have severe disabilities. Additionally, Act 220 improves state special education law by instituting comprehensive revisions that direct funding to children instead of administration.

Act 25: Gifted and Talented Program Funding

Gifted and talented children will also benefit from historic increases in education funding in Act 25. By allocating money for gifted and talented programs as well as for advanced placement classes, Wisconsin schools will be able to provide better challenges to accelerated students.

AB 880: Math and Science Graduation Requirements

AB 880 brings Wisconsin curriculum into the twenty-first century by requiring students to complete at least three years of math and three years of science classes to graduate high school. Because the next generation of careers rely heavily on math and science, Wisconsin students must be prepared to compete successfully in the global economy. As American students fall further and further behind their international peers in math and science achievement, measures like AB 880 become critical to stressing the importance of math and science studies for students.

By meeting the needs of all Wisconsin students, raising the bar for excellence in our state, and giving our schools the resources they need to teach well, all of these bills improve Wisconsin education and give its students a brighter future.

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