



### **Chris Danou's Capitol Report**

#### Majority of School Districts Experience Funding Reductions Next School Year

Even though it's the middle of July and many children probably aren't thinking about the upcoming school year quite yet, I know parents, teachers and administrators are making plans for next year. These plans range from getting school supplies, making lesson plans and finalizing operational budgets. For most of the school districts across Wisconsin, even more work will go into operational budgets because there will be fewer resources to go around.

The Department of Public Instruction (DPI) recently released figures that show 55% of the 428 school districts are receiving less state aid for next school year. This is bad news for rural schools in our community and across the state. Of those 234 districts losing money, several of them are in the 92nd Assembly District.

According to figures from DPI, a total of four school districts in the 92<sup>nd</sup> Assembly District are receiving less state aid for the 2015-2016 school year. While the reductions range in comparison, the districts losing aid include Alma, Cochrane-Fountain City, Gilmanton and Mondovi. Alma and Gilmanton are taking 16% and 11% reductions respectively while Cochrane-Fountain City and Mondovi will see 3% and 4% reductions. When looking at actual numbers, Alma will lose \$115,822 and Gilmanton will lose \$111,997 while Cochrane-Fountain City and Mondovi will lose \$110,956 and \$245,761 respectively. Overall, fewer dollars make it even more difficult for school districts to spread already thin resources.

Some districts will see an increase in funding, such as Blair-Taylor with an 8% funding increase that totals \$257,580. All other increases range between 0.13% in Eleva-Strum and 5.25% in Melrose-Mindoro. In the case of increases, every bit helps, but for those seeing reductions, every little bit hurts. Meanwhile, statutory changes made by the Governor and the Republican majority in the Assembly and Senate will send about \$130 million of public money to private charter and voucher programs. That's yet another avenue of funding loss for public education in Wisconsin.

Public education is paramount to creating jobs, building our economy and having an engaged population. Of course public education is centered on the subjects being taught in the classroom, but it also provides for extracurricular opportunities that help kids develop life skills, pursue interests and foster friendships. With fewer resources to work with, eventually something will have to give and opportunities my wife and I had might not be there for our sons.

Schools are the heart of communities and should be treated as the top priority for moving our state forward. Unfortunately, the Governor and the Republican majority don't seem to appreciate the value and importance of public education in rural areas. Fewer resources mean fewer opportunities for our children and our community, and that hurts us all. In a competitive and global society, we need to make sure we fairly fund our schools and provide them with the necessary resources to properly educate children in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

