



# WISCONSIN LEGISLATURE

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## Walker's Education Budget is Way off the Mark

MADISON – Senator John Lehman (D-Racine) and Representative Sondy Pope (D-Cross Plains) expressed deep concerns about Governor Walker's preliminary K-12 education budget initiatives.

Governor Walker and the Republican Legislature cut school aids by 10% in the last budget and now the Governor is proposing to add back a mere 1% increase for the biennium. That leaves hundreds of millions of dollars in lost aid that will continue to plague school budgets throughout Wisconsin for years.

"Last fall we held an informational session in the Education and Corrections Committee and we repeatedly heard that Walker's massive cuts only magnified the inequity in the current school funding formula," said Senator Lehman. "If the Governor was serious about helping education he would address the flaws in the funding formula by adopting Superintendent Evers' Fair Funding for Our Future proposal or something similar rather than offering a Band-Aid."

"At this pace, it will take nearly 12 years to return to the funding commitment the state made before Walker's devastating cuts," said Representative Pope. "That means a student entering kindergarten will not enjoy the same state investment in his or her education as those that came before them until they are graduating from high school. And without additional spending authority, this funding commitment will not increase the amount our schools are allowed to spend educating public school students. Not one more pencil, not one more course offering and not one more teacher will be funded under the Governor's proposal."

Governor Walker also announced his plans to expand the voucher program to school districts with at least 4,000 students and two or more schools rated in the bottom two tiers of the public school report cards. Additionally, Governor Walker is planning to spend nearly as much on unaccountable voucher schools as he plans to spend on public schools. This new funding would go toward increasing the voucher payments and creating a new special education voucher program. The budget plans released so far do not include any new voucher school accountability measures.

"Expanding vouchers and increasing the amount we pay per voucher student while continuing to push down our public schools is downright immoral," Pope said. "At the same time we are freezing spending at our public schools, we're increasing spending for voucher students across the board. I find it hard to believe that Wisconsinites feel this is the correct direction to be taking our state."

"Walker simply cannot continue sending money to unaccountable voucher schools while failing to fund our public schools," said Lehman. "This is political payback at its lowest – using special education students to give more money to unaccountable voucher schools is unacceptable for parents and taxpayers. If the Governor was serious about education he would scrap his half-baked ideas for voucher schools and use that money for meeting our constitutional obligation of equitable education for all."

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