



Your Advocacy Leads the Way

Thank you for your advocacy! Throughout the state, school officials, community leaders and parents have been pressing state leaders for more school funding. The governor and legislators are listening.

In early February, Gov. Scott Walker released his 2017-19 state budget proposal, which includes a \$200 per pupil increase in school funding along with additional funding for rural schools, school-based mental health programs, and other initiatives. These proposals closely align with the WASB's legislative agenda. The governor's budget proposal may not be perfect, but it includes important steps in improving public school funding and he deserves to be commended for recognizing this need.

We have a long way to go in the budget process before any additional dollars are confirmed and there likely will be a strong debate on the amount of funding that goes to schools versus the amount that goes to transportation or income tax cuts. And there likely will be healthy debate on the governor's budget proposal to create lifetime teacher licenses as well as an anticipated debate on lifting the per-district caps on vouchers. See this month's Capitol Watch for an in-depth analysis of the governor's state budget proposal.

Your continued advocacy is needed throughout the budget process. This month, the WASB is hosting a Day at the Capitol on March 15 for school board members and administrators. Attendees will be briefed on the governor's 2017-19 state budget proposal by Department of Administration Secretary Scott Neitzel and hear from a bipartisan legislative panel featuring state Sen. Luther Olsen (R), Sen. Minority Leader Jennifer Shilling (D), Assembly Speaker Robin Vos (R) and Rep. Sody Pope (D). The WASB government relations team will provide talking points and arrange afternoon meetings with legislators for every attendee.

The WASB Day at the Capitol will also feature a forum with the final two candidates for state superintendent of public instruction. This issue of the *Wisconsin School News* went to print before the spring primary but it's likely that the final choices will offer two distinct visions for public education for voters at the April general election.

While we need to follow the state debates closely and make our voices heard in Madison, there is likely to be a dramatic shift in education policy in Washington, D.C. as well. In late January, several members of the WASB board of directors, our lobbyists and I participated in the National School Boards Association Federal

Advocacy Institute. We were briefed on federal legislative activity and met with our state's federal representatives.

Our conversations on Capitol Hill focused on urging the Wisconsin congressional delegation to work to ensure that the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) is faithfully implemented, that the Child Nutrition Act and the Carl Perkins Career and Technical Education Act are both reauthorized and modernized, and that Congress lives up to its promises to fund the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) for students with disabilities, Title I for economically disadvantaged children, and Impact Aid for districts strapped for cash by the presence of federally tax-exempt property such as military installations and tribal lands. They were productive exchanges.

This is an exciting time for public education, with a renewed focus on schools as an economic engine and a key supplier of tomorrow's workforce. As school leaders we need to ensure that our support for greater investments in public education is heard in Madison and Washington and we need to ensure that the public schools in each of our communities maximize the investments our leaders are proposing to make in them and in our students. ■

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