



Stepping Up to the Plate

Ever since the governor proposed a budget that would essentially freeze public school spending, school board leaders across the state have stepped up to the plate to make a case for public schools. School leaders have been tirelessly advocating for an increase in revenue limits and state aids, along with stopping the expansion of the voucher program.

First, I thank you for your advocacy work and urge you to continue contacting your legislators. While it may not always seem like it, legislators are hearing you. Whether they act in our favor will depend largely on our persistence.

In addition to your advocacy efforts, the WASB is working hard on our three statewide budget priorities: increase the revenue limits; remove proposals to expand private school vouchers; and remove proposals to dramatically change charter school laws and independent charter oversight from the budget. The final two pieces — expanding the voucher program and changing charter school law — are complicated policy changes that should be debated separately from the state budget.

School districts have been asked to do more with less in recent years. After huge cuts to public school funding in the last budget, many districts continue to face fiscal challenges, even with the flexibility boards have been given. Funding ought to be proportionate to the pupils served, especially in light of the constitutional mandate to support public education.

We are asking for dramatic changes to the proposed state budget so public education is not burdened by another budget that underfunds our schools and reduces local control. That's why it's so important to work with your legislators. We ask school leaders to go above and beyond this legislative session. For instance, when your lawmakers agree with your board's position, thank them publicly. And when they don't readily agree but are receptive to your case, encourage them. Invite them to visit your schools. These small actions can end up making a big difference for your students.

Amidst the state budget debate, we are in the process of welcoming our new school board members. I, along with several of the WASB staff and our directors, had the opportu-

nity to meet many of you at some of our New School Board Member Gatherings held across the state last month. If you're a new board member and weren't able to attend, I encourage you to learn more about your new role and about how the WASB can provide support. There are many resources geared for new school board members including our webpage "Basic Resources for School Board Members." You can view this page under the "Quick Links" section of the wasb.org website.

I also want to congratulate State Superintendent Tony Evers on his re-election. We've worked together to improve the laws and regulations for public schools and I look forward to working with Tony for another four years.

Finally, I thank our school board members for the work they continue to do in educating our students and leading our schools. We ask you to continue to advocate on behalf of your schools and public education as a whole. The work you do at the local level benefits children throughout the state. ■

I thank you for your advocacy work and urge you to continue contacting your legislators.