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Olsen Comments on New School Finance Proposal

Madison – The state’s school funding formula could be changed under a proposal brought forth by State Superintendent Tony Evers this week. State Superintendent Evers unveiled his new school funding plan as part of the Department of Public Instruction’s 2011-13 biennial budget request. State Senator Luther Olsen (R-Ripon) thanked the state superintendent for presenting his plan and setting the stage for the frank discussion the state needs to have around school finance.

The plan, entitled “Fair Funding for Our Future” would guarantee a minimum of \$3,000 in state aid for each student and would move away from property value as the basis for general state aid.

“I applaud the state superintendent for bringing his plan forward and starting the discussion on this difficult issue,” said Olsen. According to most reports, the proposal would cost \$420 million over the next two years. The plan also shifts the school levy tax credit from homeowners to schools through general state aid, although a corresponding decrease in the school tax levy could be realized with the increase in general state aid.

“We have to be realistic about what we can really afford. With a \$3 billion deficit to deal with, it’s going to be difficult to increase spending by more than \$400 million.” Olsen went on to explain that any changes made to school funding will need to be meaningful and sustainable over the long haul.

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