

Superior TELEGRAM

Published May 24, 2011, 08:43 AM

School funding plan touted by state Democrats

Democratic state lawmakers brought their message about attempting to bolster education spending in the 2011-13 state budget to Eau Claire Monday.

By: [By McLean Bennett, The Eau Claire Leader-Telegram](#) , Superior Telegram

Democratic state lawmakers brought their message about attempting to bolster education spending in the 2011-13 state budget to Eau Claire Monday.

State Reps. Gordon Hintz of Oshkosh and Sondy Pope-Roberts of Middleton -- both Democrats -- outlined the Save Our Schools proposal during a public presentation at Memorial High School. The idea, they said, could mean schools would receive about \$376 million more funding for education than currently is provided for in Gov. Scott Walker's budget proposal.

Hintz characterized the proposal as an alternative to cuts in education included in Walker's budget, which trim state school funding by about \$1.68 billion in the 2011-13 state budget, according to Hintz's office.

The state Legislative Fiscal Bureau recently estimated that state tax revenue over the next three years could be about \$636 million higher than previously expected. The Save Our Schools proposal -- which has yet to be introduced officially in the state Legislature but could be added to Walker's budget as an amendment, Pope-Roberts said -- would use some of that money to fund schools.

Some of the money also would go to technical colleges, which would see cuts in Walker's budget.

"Wisconsin can do a much better job of providing public education than (Walker's) budget is going to allow," Pope-Roberts said.

Walker and others have said education spending reductions are necessary given the state's ongoing budget woes.

The Save Our Schools proposal wouldn't eliminate the cuts in state aid outlined by the governor's budget, Pope-Roberts said. But by using some of the \$636 million in unexpected revenue, the state can direct more money to schools, she said.

The proposal also calls for eliminating expansions in funding for private school vouchers and independent charter schools in Walker's budget, giving the state about \$40 million more to direct toward public school districts, Hintz said.

Parts of the proposal would mirror suggestions that state schools Superintendent Tony Evers offered last year in his Fair Funding for Our Future plan. The Save Our Schools proposal would promise school districts at least \$3,000 per student in general state aid and would consider the number of students living in poverty when deciding aid amounts -- things outlined in Evers' plan.

Hintz and Pope-Roberts both said their proposal wouldn't lead to tax increases.

"This initiative reduces property taxes statewide by reducing the share of education costs imposed on local communities," Pope-Roberts said in a written statement about the proposal.

Local Republican lawmakers could not be reached for comment or declined to discuss the plan Monday.

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