

Dear School District of Black Hawk Residents,

We are writing to share information and ask for your assistance. The Governor's 2015-2017 budget proposal has been released and contains provisions that take funding from the services provided for the students of the School District of Black Hawk and the other State of Wisconsin public schools.

The landscape surrounding public education in Wisconsin has changed dramatically over the last several years, especially since 2011. The School District of Black Hawk has navigated those changes by making cuts, changing benefit plans, closing the Gratiot facility, and other cost saving measures. The District has run out of options to make cuts and still afford our students a quality education.

Education is a service based on people providing for people. Approximately 78% of our budget pays for people. The other 22% provides to maintain and operate our facilities. To maintain our great schools we need great teachers and staff. We are now in a situation in which we are competing for those employees, not only with other school districts, but with other career fields. Universities and colleges of teacher education have seen a significant reduction in applicants therefore reducing the pool of quality educators going into the field. Even the Governor's proposal to let those holding bachelor's degrees in other fields pass a proficiency test to teach in grades 6-12 is a testament to that shortage of quality educators.

The proposed budget does address some concerns directly related to funding rural school districts. Those efforts are proposed in the form of sparsity aid and high cost transportation aid which are desperately needed by our rural districts. The effects of the Governor's proposed state budget for Black Hawk would be an additional \$25,100 in sparsity aid. Black Hawk would not qualify for high cost transportation aide. Black Hawk loses \$57,600 from the per pupil aid. The net result is that the School District of Black Hawk will have \$32,500 less to function in the 2015-2016 school year.

Some would argue that we should not invest in facilities or technology. Our students need access to technology to be prepared for the present and future jobs. Our facilities require maintenance each year to keep them viable learning environments and safe for students and staff. Through the budgeting process each year difficult decisions are made related to what will and will not be funded.

The proposed increase in the number of vouchers is only going to make the situation more difficult for public schools. The money needed to fund the vouchers needs to come from somewhere, presumably money earmarked for public education. The shift to funnel tax dollars to private voucher schools will result in less funds available for public schools, resulting in either higher local taxes or less money to run already struggling public schools. Another related issue is at this time "voucher" schools do not exist in many of our rural areas. School Districts will be forced to run referenda for higher dollar amounts or to shut their doors. Our budgets will suffer, our referenda amounts will be forced higher, and our local students will not benefit.

We are reaching out to you as a stakeholder in the School District of Black Hawk. We and the elected Board of Education are asking you to partner with us, review the Governor's proposed

state budget, and consider the impact on our district and the quality of education you want for our students and community.

Please consider contacting your legislators to let them know how you feel about the impact of the proposed budget on the School District of Black Hawk. I have contacted our law makers and requested, "I would encourage you to fight for changes to the state budget that allow for increased revenue limits, to maintain or increase the per pupil aid, and to provide for the targeted funding for the rural schools." We continuously strive to improve the learning environment in our schools and refuse to settle for the status quo, and your advocacy will help with this mission.

The following links provide more information on the budget as well as contact information for legislators:

Comparison of the request of Department of Public Instruction and the Governor's proposal:
https://www.wasbmemberservices.org/websites/advoc_gov_relations/File/state_issues/budget_chart_dpi_gov_2-2015.pdf

Contact information for Legislators: <http://legis.wisconsin.gov/>

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Sincerely,

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