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Statement on call for $275 increase in revenue limit for public schools

Tom Beebe, program director with the Institute for Wisconsin’s Future, made the following statement, today, after Democratic members of the Legislature’s Joint Finance Committee asked for a $275 increase in the revenue limit or the ability of Wisconsin’s public schools to raise and spend resources on quality education:

We have been asking someone in the Legislature to take a principled stand for kids and the public schools of Wisconsin and, Tuesday, Democratic members of the Joint Finance Committee did just that by asking for a $275 increase in the revenue limit—the resources local school districts can spend on boosting the quality of education.

For too long state government decisions have dealt districts death by a thousand cuts.... two decades of funding that hasn't met the needs of kids. Most recently, the Governor and Legislature have passed and proposed budgets that cut from children hundreds of millions of dollars more in opportunities to learn.

Today's action could start to change the results of all of those bad decisions.

Wisconsin now projects a healthy increase in revenue over the next two years. Those hundreds of millions of dollars in additional resources must be used to restore funding for K-12 public education. In addition, millions have been allocated in the budget for expanding Wisconsin's failed voucher experiment. Those resources could be spent much better on behalf of the 872,000 public school children in the state.

The alternative is the budget that’s currently on the table. It is a proposal that strips even more resources from public schools and more opportunities from our children.

It hasn’t always been that way. Back in 2010 a group of Republican legislators had the good sense to co-sponsor a bill that gave a per-pupil revenue boost of $275 to public schools. Assembly Bill 919 even mapped out a route to raise state aid, over six years, to the percentage it had been for decades.

It's time for Republicans and Democrats to come together and make good on the promises of AB919.

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