

WASBO Fall Conference

Legislative Update

October 8th, 2021

Political Backdrop

- Most difficult political environment I have ever faced in 20 years of lobbying.
- View everything through the lens of the 2022 gubernatorial election.
- This state budget was Governor Evers' reelection budget.
- GOP objective was to prevent a victory for the Governor on the budget.
- GOP believes it is their job to get the Governor "fired" in 2022.

2021-23 State Budget

- Context: 2019-21 State Budget provided K-12 education with a \$570 million increase.
- Of \$685 million K-12 "investment" in this budget, only \$128 million is "spendable".
- Evers' Team outmaneuvered by GOP in the budget process.
- GOP K-12 action unjustified given unprecedented available revenues. Opportunity missed.
- GOP established minimum \$781/pupil grant for LEAs doing 50% in-person in 2020-21.
- Confusion remains over ESSER II, III discretionary funds distribution and how ESSER III funds can be utilized to operate schools in 2021-23.
- At budget signing, Evers announced additional \$100+ million in federal funds for K-12.
- It appears \$\$ will be distributed on per pupil basis; \$126/kid; max flex for districts.
- Still waiting for final details – District amounts, availability of funds.

Major K-12 Items in 2021-23 State Budget

- **No increase under Revenue Limits.**
- **No increase to Per Pupil Aid.**
- **No increase to Low Revenue Ceiling.**
- **General State Aid.** Increase by \$408 million over the biennium.
- **Buyback of Delayed Aid Payment.** Provide \$75 million in 1st year to remove the delay.
- **Delete Independent Charter School Aid Deduction.** Results in \$166.7 million increase in general state aid over the biennium.
- **Special Education Aid.** Increase by \$85.4 million over the biennium, to reach 30% state reimbursement in the 2nd year.
- **High-Cost Special Education Aid.** Increase by \$3.8 million over the biennium.
- **School Mental Health Collaborative Grant.** Increase by \$7.0 million over biennium.
- **School Mental Health Categorical Aid.** Increase by \$12.0 million over the biennium. Current law parameters. School social worker costs. Doubles funding, but . . .
- **Sparsity Aid.** Create 2nd tier for aid at \$100/pupil for districts w/746-1,000 pupils. Increase \$6.3 million over the biennium.
- **High-Cost Transportation.** Lower aid threshold from 145% to 140% of statewide average. Increase by \$12.7 million over the biennium.

Remainder of Legislative Session

- I anticipate that few education bills will become law this session.
- There are no policy priorities; Political priorities are in the driver's seat.
- GOP will pass lots of bills that the Governor will veto.

- GOP will use the vetoes to mobilize party base in 2022 gubernatorial campaign.
- Evers Campaign – Vetoes stopped lots of bad policy ideas.

Legislation in Play

- **AB 162/SB 177** – This bill provides for equalization aid payments to school districts in four equal installments of 25% each after a five-year phase-in. SAA supports.
- **AB 411/SB 411** – This bill prohibits race or sex stereotyping in 1) instruction provided to pupils; 2) training provided to school employees. The bill provides for withholding of up to 10% of state aid and allows for parents/guardians to bring legal claims against the district for violations. Requires school boards to post all curricula used in the district and provide a printed copy of curriculum at no cost to the requester. SAA opposes. Passed Assembly.
- **AB 348/SB 355** – Tobacco 21. This bill raises the legal age for purchasing cigarettes, tobacco products, nicotine products or vapor products, from 18-21. SAA supports.
- **AB 378/SB 373** – Relating to making school district and school financial information available to the public. Passed both houses. SAA supports.
- **AB 435/SB 431** – This bill requires the state superintendent to incorporate cursive writing into the model academic standards for English language arts; requires school boards to include cursive writing in curriculum for the elementary grades. SAA opposes. Passed Assembly.
- **AB 446/SB 454** – Relating to reading readiness assessments. SAA opposes.
- **AB 488/SB 463** – This bill requires school boards to make information about learning materials/educational activities used for pupil instruction available to the public. Allows a district resident to bring legal action to compel compliance. SAA opposes. Passed both houses.
- **AB 475/SB 448** – This bill requires a municipality, county, or school district to include with a referendum question for issuing bonds a statement of the estimated interest accruing on the amount of the bonds. SAA opposes.

SAA Projects for 2021-22

- Evidence-Based Policy Agenda, 2022.
- Examine “School Finance Primer” commissioned to provide evidence-based analysis of Wisconsin school finance system including recommendations for improvements.
- Develop member professional development program on effective advocacy practices.
- Conduct facilitated SAA Strategic Planning around the questions: What does the membership want from the SAA today? What does an effective SAA look like? What strategies and means (capacity, staffing, etc.) are necessary to get there?

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