

Gov. Walker: Invest in student success and a strong workforce

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Madison - Governor Scott Walker released the following column today calling on citizens who support Wisconsin's schools to contact their legislators and urge them to back his plan for record K-12 education funding. This column is for your consideration to publish.

Invest in Student Success and a Strong Workforce

By Scott Walker

Our state budget invests more into K-12 education than ever before in Wisconsin.

In total, the budget I submitted to the state Legislature in February includes \$11.5 billion for K-12 education, and because of our reforms, these dollars will overwhelmingly go into the classroom to help improve student success.

We provide \$200 per student in the first year, and another \$204 per student in the second year, for every school district in the state. This represents an increase of \$649 million for all K-12 schools. Plus, we increase support for rural schools so the high costs of things like transportation don't take away from their ability to provide a great education.

On top of that, our budget increases funding for access to technology in our schools, and we seek to expand broadband to every part of the state. We also increase support for early college credit programs that give our students a head start on a technical college degree or an undergraduate degree at a college or university.

The Wisconsin Association of School Boards recently put out an alert to its members to support my state budget proposal and to encourage members of the state Legislature to support the plan, too. The school board leaders are concerned that some lawmakers might

want to cut back on our historic levels of funding for K-12 education.

If you support our schools in Wisconsin, I ask that you contact your local lawmaker and encourage her or him to support the increases for K-12 education included in my budget plan.

As the father of two sons who graduated from public schools, and the uncle of two nieces who are still in public schools, I believe that providing every child with access to a great education is a moral imperative. And as Governor, I also believe that it is an economic imperative.

Improving student success will help us build an even stronger workforce.

New numbers show that the labor force in Wisconsin is the largest it has ever been, and the current unemployment rate of 3.7% is the lowest since November of 2000 (when Tommy Thompson was still Governor and Bill Clinton was still President). Overall, the percentage of people working (68.3%) is one of the best in the country and 5.3 points higher than the national rate.

Now, more than ever, we need to invest in ways to build our workforce:

- More money into K-12 than ever before.
- More money into our technical college system than ever before.
- Over \$100 million more into our University of Wisconsin System.
- Increased funding for customized worker training.

These are all ways to fill our workforce needs for the future.

We are also pushing a new program called Wisconsin Works for Everyone that will help people transition from government dependence to true independence through the dignity of hard work. We will help our neighbor when they are down and out, but public assistance should be more like a trampoline than a hammock.

Each of these ideas will help us fill our workforce needs for the foreseeable future. Now, we need the members of the state Legislature to approve these priorities in our next state budget.

The people of Wisconsin want their state government to invest in student success and in building a strong workforce. This is what I heard at our listening sessions across the state. I will fight for our historic investments in K-12 education and worker training.

Scott Walker is the governor of Wisconsin.