

Rep Pope: JFC Republicans prioritize voucher expansion and limiting local control

Posted on Tuesday, Aug 29, 2017

>> **WisPolitics is now on the State Affairs network. Get custom keyword notifications, bill tracking and all WisPolitics content. [Get the app or access via desktop.](#)**

Contact: Rep. Sondy Pope [608-266-3520](tel:608-266-3520)

MADISON, Wis. – After nearly two months past the budget deadline, Republicans on the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) approved a motion that would increase the income threshold for families to qualify for the statewide voucher program. The motion also limits the ability for local school boards to hold referenda when locally elected officials deem them necessary. In response, Representative Sondy Pope (D-Mt. Horeb), the ranking Democrat on the Assembly Committee on Education issued the following statement:

“For seven years Governor Walker and Republican leadership have had the opportunity to prioritize public schools and still managed to come up short. After each budget they’ve patted themselves on the back for restoring small increments of the massive cuts that took place in 2011’s Act 10,” said Rep. Pope. “Should this budget pass as is, Wisconsin will still be below the national average for public education funding. This is a troubling contrast to the reputation that our state has built and maintained for decades, as a national leader in public education – before this administration took power.”

Over the past few budgets, expansion of the voucher program has diverted much needed funding away from local school districts. In response, thousands of Wisconsin citizens have voted to raise their own taxes through referendums to keep their neighborhood schools strong and in many cases – operating. The changes in the JFC Republican motion could expand the statewide voucher program to over 500 additional students, further exacerbating an already existing problem.

“In recent years, record numbers of local school districts were forced to raise property taxes to make up for funding losses and the aid redirected to the expansion of voucher schools,” Rep. Pope said. “Now, Republicans are continuing on their path of restricting local control, starving schools of resources in an attempt to legitimize their push to privatize education at the behest of their campaign donors.”