

# Rep. Swearingen: Supports state budget

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Madison, WI – Representative Rob Swearingen (R – Rhinelander) released the following statement after the Assembly approved the 2017-2019 biennial state budget, which makes a historic investment in public education, includes substantial funding for broadband expansion and provides tax relief for hardworking Wisconsinites.

“I am very encouraged that my colleagues in the Wisconsin State Legislature voted to prioritize K-12 education and level the playing field to help fund rural schools. Republicans voted to increase state aid to school districts by more than \$600 million, with more money directed into the classroom. This package provides an additional \$200 in per-pupil funding in FY18 and \$204 in FY19 that will be guaranteed to every student throughout the state. It is clear that Republicans are committed to addressing the funding inequities that rural schools face on a continual basis,” said Rep. Swearingen.

Below are provisions in the budget education package that address K-12 education in rural areas:

- Increases the low-revenue ceiling to \$9,400 per pupil by the second year of the biennium and \$100 each year until it reaches \$9,800 per pupil;
- Fully funds the sparsity aid program;
- Expands eligibility for high-cost transportation aid so that more districts may receive aid and fully funds the program;
- Creates an incentive-based aid program to encourage school districts to share administrative positions;
- Builds on the Whole Grade Sharing Agreement program created in the last budget

by providing incentive aid to encourage school districts to enter into an agreement;  
-Provides \$1M to connect future teachers with rural school districts facing teacher shortages;  
· Provide \$1,500,000 FY18 for the Wisconsin Library Association.

In addition to K-12 education funding, the Legislature provided \$14,000,000 to improve broadband expansion throughout the state.

“Time and time again, it has become evident that broadband expansion remains a top priority for the Northwoods. In order to attract new businesses, enhance educational opportunities, and create more family sustaining jobs, it was important for the legislature to prioritize additional grant funds to connect rural areas. I am confident that this funding, coupled with the work being done by the Public Service Commission (PSC) through the broadband expansion grants, will help bring new opportunities to businesses, schools and citizens alike in the area.”

Lastly, the state budget included a tax package that will provide much needed tax relief to hardworking individuals and business owners across the state. The budget includes the following:

- Partial repeal of Personal Property Tax – Beginning January 1, 2018, non-manufacturing machinery, tools, and patterns will be excluded from the personal property tax. To hold municipalities harmless, the state will provide \$74.4M to offset the exemption.
- Property Taxes – this budget keeps property taxes below 2014 levels.
- Restored current law for the Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credit program.
- Eliminated the soda water tax and the alternative minimum tax.

“As a small business owner myself, I understand the burden of high taxes. This tax package not only helps hard working Wisconsin families keep more money in their own pockets, but promotes a better economic environment for small and large businesses alike by lowering property taxes and repealing the partial property tax.

This legislation builds on our mission to make Wisconsin a great place to live, work and raise a family.”

The budget bill passed the Assembly on a 57-39 vote.