

Wisconsin State Senate Democratic Committee: Marklein votes to cut rural school funding

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GOP lawmaker favors Milwaukee private school vouchers over rural districts

MADISON, WI – As a key member of the Legislature’s Joint Finance Committee, Sen. Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) should have been able to use his position to protect rural schools in his district from budget uncertainty. Instead, Marklein sided with voucher school lobbyists to increase taxpayer subsidies for private schools in Milwaukee while cutting \$18.1 million in sparsity aid for small, rural school districts, including more than \$2 million from schools in his own district.

“Rather than fighting to restore state funding to rural schools, Sen. Marklein chose to side with party leaders and send more tax dollars to private voucher schools in Milwaukee while cutting aid that would have gone to schools in his own district,” said Jenni Dye, SSDC Executive Director. “Across southwest Wisconsin, schools and communities are being forced to do more with less as a result of Republican school cuts. Rural schools are losing teachers, referendums are becoming more common and homeowners are shouldering additional costs. At a time when Republicans want to give \$3 billion in state taxpayer subsidies to a foreign corporation, rural schools are being left behind by Sen. Marklein and his special interest allies.”

According to media reports, prior to the vote Marklein acknowledged the Republican plan would mean \$2.2 million less in aid to rural schools in his district. Marklein then went on to vote for the cut, along with every other Republican member of the committee.

With a state budget nearly two months overdue, many small and rural communities are struggling to set their budgets, hire teachers and purchase classroom materials. The \$18.1 million cut in state sparsity aid by Sen. Marklein will compound financial challenges for many Wisconsin districts already being hit by state school payment delays as a result of the ongoing Republican budget delay.