

Rep. Phelps, Assembly Democrats: Have a plan to provide significant property tax relief by covering public school costs

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MADISON, WI – On March 14, State Representative Christian Phelps (D-Eau Claire), alongside Representative Angelina Cruz (D-Racine), introduced a proposal to use \$1.3 billion of the state’s surplus to provide significant property tax relief statewide and increase state funding for public schools.

State Representative Christian Phelps (D-Eau Claire), a member of the Assembly Committee on Education and former special education paraprofessional, released the following statement:

“While Speaker Vos and Assembly Republicans pack up and head home early, we know that there is still work to be done. All session long, Wisconsinites have been asking for more funding for our schools and action to lower property taxes. We need to act on these priorities.

“We have a straightforward solution: pick up the tab for constitutionally-mandated public school services, and meaningfully keep down local property taxes without further shortchanging our communities. When the state pays its fair share, property taxes stay down. It’s that simple.

“Our proposal increases general school aid paid by the state, using just some of the surplus funds at our disposal. By doing so, we project the state can deliver serious relief to property taxpayers who have been footing the bill left to them by years of Republican budgeting.

“Second, our proposal addresses a universal strain on public school districts’ tight budgets: the low reimbursement rate for special education services. While Legislative Republicans claimed they would reimburse 42% of special education costs in public schools this year and 45% next year, they budgeted insufficiently and are expected to fall some 7% short of their promise. Our bill uses existing surplus funds to increase reimbursement rates to 60%, allocates enough money to meet that commitment, and **would significantly reduce the need for operating referendums across Wisconsin.**”

“We know this proposal will have bipartisan support in our neighborhoods. What remains to be seen is whether it will have bipartisan support inside the Capitol. I hope Legislative Republicans and Governor Evers are ready to listen to public education professionals, parents, and local taxpayers, and pass our bill.”