

Secretary of State Godlewski: Announces historic \$73.5 million Common School Fund distribution for Wisconsin public Schools

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Eau Claire, WI — Wisconsin Secretary of State Sarah Godlewski today announced a record-breaking \$73.5 million distribution from the Common School Fund, the largest in the Fund's history, during a press conference held at the Memorial High School Library in Eau Claire.

The 2026 distribution represents a 5% increase over last year and will provide critical support for public school libraries and media centers in every Wisconsin school district. Funds will be used for books, literacy materials, digital resources, and technology, helping ensure students statewide regardless of zip code have access to the tools they need to succeed while easing pressure on local property taxpayers.

"As Chair of the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands and a proud graduate of Wisconsin public schools, this moment is deeply meaningful to me," said Secretary Godlewski. "This historic distribution shows what's possible when we invest wisely and keep our promise to Wisconsin's kids. The Common School Fund isn't just about dollars, it's about opportunity, equity, and our shared future."

The Common School Fund, established in 1848 and enshrined in Wisconsin's Constitution, is one of the oldest permanent school funds in the nation. Originally built through the sale of federally granted land, the Fund has grown into a \$1.6 billion trust whose earnings are dedicated exclusively to supporting public education and school libraries.

Today, the Common School Fund is the only dedicated source of state funding for public school libraries and, for many districts, the sole funding available for library books, newspapers, periodicals, digital tools, and computer hardware and software – often serving as a student’s primary access point to online learning and research.

Under Secretary Godlewski’s leadership, the Board of Commissioners of Public Lands has modernized its investment strategy to responsibly grow the Fund while protecting it for future generations. The Fund is diversified to include investments in Wisconsin-based start-ups and direct loans to Wisconsin municipalities through the State Trust Fund Loan Program.

“I’m proud of how our investment strategy has not only strengthened local economies through financing projects like expanded broadband access and supporting housing and infrastructure projects, but we’ve nearly doubled the annual distribution to our public schools since I started in this role as Chair of the BCPL,” Godlewski said. “This growth means more books in students’ hands, stronger libraries, and reliable access to technology, so a student’s opportunity isn’t determined by their zip code. After six years as Chair, I’m incredibly proud that this Fund is stronger, more resilient, and delivering opportunity to every corner of Wisconsin.”

Secretary Godlewski was joined at the event by State Treasurer John Leiber, education leaders, library advocates, and local school officials, who highlighted the impact of the Common School Fund at a time when many districts are facing increasing financial strain and turning to local referendums to maintain basic services.

Each April, net earnings from the Common School Fund are distributed by the Department of Public Instruction to every Wisconsin public school district ensuring consistent statewide support for literacy, learning, and digital access.