



For Immediate Release: June 21, 2021

JFC's Budget Decision Puts Rural Districts in a Position to Tax Themselves

Plain — From Executive Director Kim Kaukl. The Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance WiRSA is extremely concerned with the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) decision to not adequately invest in K-12 education in its 2021-23 biennial budget.

The final budget decisions on education taken by the Joint Finance Committee (JFC) on Thursday is another example of the leadership short sightedness to appropriately meet the needs of public education. Although the leadership will tell you that they are putting historic dollars into public education this is somewhat of a shell game. They did initially put \$128 million in education that did move us slightly forward in some areas, like special education but much less than what they provided in the previous budget and only about 10% of what was in the budget proposed by Governor Evers. Last Thursday, the additional dollars provided to education by the JFC to meet the MOE in order to receive the federal dollars that our schools were already entitled to is geared toward property tax relief and not spendable dollars for our schools.

What this means, simply stated, is that by putting the additional dollars in certain educational funds will look like educational funding in name only. These dollars are geared to assist in property tax relief; the dollars are not spendable for our schools. As matter of fact, some rural schools, and their taxpayers, will not see property tax relief due to their negative position within the school funding formula. Thus, by not providing spendable dollars for schools this will force many districts to continue to develop operational budgets via the referendum, thus causing local taxpayers to tax themselves to keep their schools running.

The Joint Finance Committee had one of the greatest opportunities with the present surplus they have to develop a budget that could have checked off a lot of boxes for both parties and made everyone happy on both side of the aisle. (For more information see the recently published report from the nonpartisan [Wisconsin Policy Forum](#).) There was enough money to efficiently provide tax relief, invest in spendable dollars for education, infrastructure and many other areas that needed to be addressed. In my opinion, the JFC took the partisan way out and failed to do what is right for the students and communities of Wisconsin.

WiRSA encourages all constituents to contact your legislators and share your disappointment with the decisions that have been made regarding how our schools are funded in this budget.

###

The Wisconsin Rural Schools Alliance (WiRSA) is an organization of 230 plus members and represents 167 rural school districts. WiRSA represents the students, administrators, teachers, school board members and communities of our rural schools.