

LWVWI Legislative Committee – Public Education Report

The following is a sample of a statement on public education that can be used by League members at the Joint Finance hearings. It can be helpful to connect with other public education support groups, especially the Wisconsin Public Education Network as well as regional advocacy groups related to WPEN.

SAMPLE STATEMENT TO JOINT FINANCE

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin has long supported a strong system of public education in our state. We are very concerned that in recent times there has been a weakening of state support for this fundamental responsibility.

As we assess the Governor's budget proposals, we are aware there is a proposed increase for public schools. Although we encourage you to support the proposed increase, we note that it would not make up for the decreases in recent budgets. Furthermore, we are concerned that there are strings attached as to how the proposed funds would be allocated.

We draw attention to the Governor's proposals that would allocate increased funding differently from the current equalized formula. Instead of using the state's general aid formula, the proposal would allocate funding on a flat per-pupil basis. As a result, the state's wealthiest districts would receive more proportionally than districts with a larger percentage of low-income families. This would be unjust and would increase the challenges to providing good education for all children. The unfairness is exacerbated when schools are publicly "graded" without taking into consideration these inequities.

Funding for Voucher Programs would continue to rise in this budget at the expense of meaningful funding for public schools. One result would be that per-pupil state support for private school students would be greater than for public school students. At the same time, voucher schools are not required to be accountable for reporting on the same measures as public schools.

The League of Women Voters believes in the responsibility of the state for high quality public education for all. Funding should take into account the varying needs of communities and students, especially as related to the relative affluence of school populations. To increase public funding of private education (vouchers) in any way is absolutely unacceptable.

We urge you to ensure that Wisconsin guarantees a public education committed to the future of all our children and the communities in which we live.