



*The Grassroots Gazette fosters community dialogue and participation throughout Southwest Wisconsin.*

## 150 PEOPLE HEARD HOW IOWA COUNTY SCHOOLS WILL BE AFFECTED BY THE STATE BUDGET CUTS TO EDUCATION

(See review of event below)

**Now it's YOUR turn to be heard!**

Talk to Rep. Novak about the budget tomorrow  
Fri., June 12 at 1:30 p.m. at Dodgeville City Hall

Fri., June 12, 1:30 p.m. (Dodgeville City Hall) MEET REP. TODD NOVAK TO DISCUSS PUBLIC/PRIVATE SCHOOL FUNDING CONCERNS Rep. Novak has promised to be there. Sen. Howard Marklein will be sending a representative if he can't be there himself. Check out the "Support Our Schools" website at [www.soswisconsin.com](http://www.soswisconsin.com) before you go so that you are prepared to ask the penetrating questions. Find out how Novak and Marklein are planning to vote on the budget. Listen carefully to claims that the legislature has "restored" \$208 million to educational state aid. Drill down - can you find out where that money is actually going?

Follow up report on June 2 "Future of Iowa County Public Schools" event in Mineral Point The message at the June 2 event, attended by 150 people, was strong and clear. The very essence of Wisconsin's Public Education System is in peril. In brief, the main issues are:

- Inadequate funding: Proposed funding does not keep up with rising costs due to inflation and also gives public money to fund private schools before our public schools get a dime.
- Voucher school expansion: Public taxpayer money is given to fund private schools.
- Independent charter school expansion: Public taxpayer money is given to fund private schools.
- Elimination of teacher licensing requirements: This will put WI last (in the entire USA) for teacher requirements. Anyone, even those without a high school diploma, will be allowed to teach 6-12 grades.

Luke Francois, Mineral Point School District Superintendent, listed the educational services and physical plant repairs that he and his school board have had to cut because money is no longer available — needed teachers that can't be hired, speech and special education services that can't be provided, asbestos in the hallway tiles that can't be replaced, a boiler that's so old you

can see the flames through the walls. Other Iowa County school districts are apparently in the same bind, with representatives from almost all of the districts among the audience at the event.

Julie Mead, professor at UW-Madison Educational Law Department, pointed out that our rural schools now must give up a substantial portion of their state aid to pay for private voucher school students. She pointed out that the voucher program, once limited to Milwaukee, will now be expanded if the state budget passes. The other speakers at the forum painted an equally disturbing picture of the diminishing funds for public schools and its effect on the future of democracy.

School funding and state aid, always a highly complex topic, has become even more so in recent years as our State leaders have pushed for more voucher and charter schools. These schools will have little to no public oversight, yet will be paid for by taxpayer contributions. This money will come directly out of funding supposedly set aside for our public schools.

Many participants left the session discouraged. "What can we do about it?" asked one parent, obviously speaking for many others.

"Our job has just begun," said Jubie Simonson, one of the organizers of the event for our Grassroots Education Task Force. **"Our legislators hope we don't know. And if we know they hope we don't care. And if we care they hope we don't act."** Taking action is exactly what Simonson wants people to do and in fact, it is the only thing that will make a difference.

Step 1: Learn the facts. Visit the website "Support Our Schools" at [www.soswisconsin.com](http://www.soswisconsin.com) and share the group's [Facebook page](#).

Step 2: Contact your legislators - over and over again. Email, call, write a letter, submit a letter to the editor, call in to a radio talk show and meet with your legislators in person. Be skeptical about what you hear. Follow up: Do your representatives actually vote the way they say they will when you talk to them face to face - or not? Who are their big campaign donors and how many of them are out of state? Do any of their big donors operate for-profit schools? How much pressure do they get internally to vote one way or another? Do they understand how their actions will affect public schools? Why don't we vote on school funding as a separate bill instead of wrapped into a big budget bill?

Step 3: Vote in EVERY election. Be willing to work hard to elect state legislators who share your views about the importance of public schools and their impact on the future of our democracy.

"The proposed budget is alarming! It will undermine the fundamental right of every child in Wisconsin to receive a high quality public education. Let's work together to make a difference - learn the facts, talk to your neighbors and contact your legislators. Our children need us to be their voices - quality education is the foundation for a thriving future!" Jessica Wieczorek (Dodgeville mother and concerned citizen).



June 19 through July 15 (Dodgeville, Mineral Point, Cobb, Highland) CRANE FOLDING EVENTS A world free of nuclear weapons is an aim of the Iowa County Citizens for Peace group. To demonstrate your support for this idea and to meet new friends, learn how to fold an origami crane at any of the following events. The Peace Group plans to send 1,000 cranes - or more - to Los Alamos, New Mexico (where the atomic bomb was developed) at the end of July, as part of a national challenge to collect 70,000 cranes to commemorate the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Hiroshima/Nagasaki bombings.

Check out our [Grassroots website](#) for more info.

Crane-Folding Sessions:

- Dodgeville - Public Library, Fridays, June 19, July 3 & 17, 1-3 p.m.
- Dodgeville - Home of UCC Pastor Joylynn Graham, Wednesday, July 1, potluck lunch, noon at 607 W. Chapel Street, Dodgeville.
- Mineral Point - Public Library, Wednesday, July 8 & 15, 1-3 p.m.
- Cobb - Public Library, Thursday, June 25, 1-3 p.m.
- Highland - Sts. Anthony & Philip Parish, Sunday, June 28, 10-noon

GRASSROOTS CITIZENS OF WISCONSIN, an energetic group of over 1000 people in Iowa, Sauk, Crawford, Richland, Lafayette and Grant Counties who are interested in taking an active role in improving government and promoting rational discussions of local, state and national issues. For further information, or to add a friend to our mailing list, please contact: Shirley Barnes, Grassroots Citizens of Wisconsin, 2473 Mt. Hope Road, Dodgeville, WI. 53533, 608-623-2109, e-mail: [grassroots@merr.com](mailto:grassroots@merr.com).

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