

Wisconsin Deserves Better Than This Republican Budget

Written by Peter Barca, Assembly Democratic Leader, District 64

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MADISON - While the ink dries on the new state budget, one thing remains clear: the anti-education, anti-middle class Republican budget is not a budget for the people of Wisconsin. It throws the people of Wisconsin under Governor Walker's campaign bus as he travels to Iowa, New Hampshire and other primary states to launch his presidential run. And incredibly, the Republican legislature took the governor's historically harmful budget and made it even worse.

The Republican budget will remove up to \$800 million from Wisconsin's public schools and give it to unaccountable private voucher schools over the next decade as a favor to their private-school campaign contributors. The state Department of Public Instruction estimates that most Wisconsin public school districts will see state aid cuts in the coming year. Not only have Wisconsin Republicans refused to make our public schools whole, they are continuing to essentially dismantle our public schools through massive cuts and creating uncertain teacher standards so they can focus instead on paying back their private-school campaign contributors.

Our local schools aren't the only ones taking a huge hit. Republicans are also making a \$250 million cut to our world-class university system. At a time when other states across the country are investing in higher education, universities in Wisconsin are facing the largest cut to higher education of any state in the country. This cut will only harm our universities' ability to serve as a vital economic engine for our state and prepare our workers for success in a 21st-Century economy.

To top it all off, despite promises to the contrary, Republicans are kicking a bigger can down a longer road on needed infrastructure while also gutting funding for transportation projects with Republican legislators making changes to the governor's budget that will cost 5,500 good-paying jobs. And they are dismantling successful long-term care programs that provide independence and confidence for thousands of seniors, people with disabilities and others with fragile health conditions.

Wisconsin has traditionally been known for having great public schools, strong universities, bountiful natural resources and a nationally respected model for caring for our most vulnerable. Yet the Republican budget sells out these proud traditions, our kids and our families in order to pay back their special interest supporters and further Governor Walker's presidential ambitions. There is no part of what makes Wisconsin great that goes unharmed with this budget.

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My Democratic colleagues have heard from citizens from across the state who told us how damaging this Republican budget is to their livelihoods and their communities, so we offered more than 50 amendments that fit Wisconsin values. Unfortunately every Democratic amendment was rejected – nearly every one on a party-line vote – as Republicans passed up every opportunity to make this budget better.

You deserved better than this budget. But despite all that is wrong with it, Democrats are more determined than ever to stand up for the people of Wisconsin and propose ideas that are true to the values we have held dear for generations: quality public education, a world-class university system, economic development and quality infrastructure, and working to improve the livelihoods and quality of life of Wisconsin's hardworking middle-class families.