

# WASBO Fall Conference 2022

## State Budget Advocacy

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# Goal of the Legislative Advocacy Series

***Strengthen the ability of all superintendents to influence their legislators and their communities in support of enhanced educational opportunities for all Wisconsin school children.***



# SAA Legislative Advocacy Series

## The Modules Planned for the Series

- Foundations in Advocacy
- First Things First – Getting Started in Advocacy
- The Legislative and State Budget Processes
- Building Relationships with Your Legislators
- **State Budget Advocacy**
- Influencing Your Community
- Influencing the Media
- Investing in Influence – SAA PAC Contributions



# Today's Agenda

- **Foundations in Advocacy. What is the SAA? Why Collective Action?**
- **2023-25 State Budget – Context, Outlook, SAA Approach and Priorities.**
- **“Telling Your District Budget Story”.**
- **SAA Budget Alerts; Testifying Before Joint Finance Committee.**
- **Who's Lobbying Who?**



# What is the SAA?

- **SAA exists for one reason – Government Relations.**
- **Five Associations – AWSA, WASBO, WASDA, WASPA, WCASS.**
- **A stronger, more unified political voice to better serve kids.**
- **That's five associations speaking with one voice on behalf of Wisconsin school children.**



# SAA History and Mission

- Founded in 1991 when AWSA and WASDA combined advocacy efforts.
- WASBO (1992) and WCASS (1994) joined shortly thereafter.
- Incorporated as a 501(c)(4) in 2016.
- WASPA became the fifth SAA association in 2018.
- SAA Mission: *To represent the interests of Wisconsin school children.*



# Respective Roles – Superintendent and SAA

- Superintendent represents the interests of local students, parents and community.
- Advocating for the district's students is a critical part of the superintendent's job.
- SAA represents the collective interest of all SAA members statewide.
- SAA also advocates for the long-term interests of public education in Wisconsin.
- Historically, SAA members have strongly supported collective action in policy development.



# SAA Core Advocacy Principles

- **ALL MEANS ALL!** Every child, every day. No matter their zip code. No matter their educational needs.
- **We don't stand for anything that is wrong for students.**
- **Collective action in advocacy and policy development.** Flows naturally from our support for all children.





# Why Collective Action?

- Historically, the party in power has sought to divide the SAA. Why?
- A divided SAA is a weaker SAA.
- By extension, divided K-12 groups = weaker advocacy for public schools.
- Collective action has proven to generate the best results for all children.



# Context of this State Budget

- Messaging the historical/policy context of this budget “ask” is critical.
- 2019-21 Budget provided K-12 education with \$570 million “spendable” increase. 2021-23 Budget – Only \$128 million of \$685 million “investment” was spendable.
- In 2002, Wis. per-pupil spending ranked 11<sup>th</sup> highest; 11% above national average. In 2020, Wis. per-pupil spending ranked 25<sup>th</sup>; 5.6% below national average.
- State per-pupil funding has lagged the rate of inflation by \$3.16 billion over the last 15 years.
- 2021-23 revenue cap freeze; ESSER fiscal cliff; huge impact of inflation.



# Outlook for 2023-25 State Budget

- **Who is Governor will have a big impact on 2023-25 State Budget for K-12.**
- **GOP will control both houses – Joint Finance Committee, 12-4 GOP.**
- **State has a projected big surplus but, the next budget will be challenging for K-12. Why?**
- **GOP lawmakers have no appetite for additional K-12 spending, and other areas of the state budget (notably Medicaid) also face a fiscal cliff. Rising chance of recession.**
- **Add it up again, it looks like a very tough, uncertain 2023-25 budget for K-12.**



# SAA Approach to 2023-25 Budget

- SAA objective – **Get the Most, For the Most, In the Most!!**
- Maximize flexible, spendable revenues.
- Seek funding balance! Positive outcome for all districts!
- Work with DPI/Governor's Office to align budget priorities, and with key lawmakers to find common ground.
- Work to achieve “representative” priorities inside SAA. Increasingly difficult.
- **It's the Main Thing, Stupid!!** Focus advocacy efforts on top priorities.
- SAA will likely emphasize just a few top priorities this budget.



# State Budget Priorities

SAA is continuing to solicit feedback from members on a state budget approach that emphasizes a few big priorities:

- **Special Education Funding** – 45% first year; 60% second year.
  - **General Spending Authority** – a balanced approach using both revenue limit/general aid and per pupil categorical aid to better meet the needs of all districts.
  - **Children’s Mental Health** – support flexible categorical aid.
- What are your thoughts on this BIG strategy – emphasizing big, spendable revenues?



# Budget Advocacy Timeline

- **December 2022/January 2023 – Begin discussions with legislators on district budget needs.**
- **February 2023 – Governor introduces Executive Budget.**
- **March 2023 – First SAA State Budget Alert to members: “Tell Your District Budget Story”.**
- **April 2023 – JFC holds public hearings on the governor’s budget proposal. SAA will encourage members to testify in support of SAA state budget priorities.**



# Budget Advocacy Timeline

- **May 2023** – JFC modifies the governor’s budget proposal. SAA issues State Budget Alert(s) to members.
- **June 2023** – The budget bill is adopted in both houses. SAA may issue a State Budget Alert to members.
- **June-July 2023** – Gubernatorial action on the budget bill. SAA may encourage members to advocate for partial vetoes of the budget.



# Telling Your District Budget Story

**Please share your thoughts on the following:**

**A couple weeks after the introduction of the Governor’s Executive Budget in February 2023, the SAA will ask you to advocate for the SAA State Budget priorities with the members of the Joint Finance Committee and your legislators by “telling your district budget story”.**

**In your estimation, what are the essential elements of your district’s budget story?**





# Key Points to Remember

- Remember, you are the expert on your district's budget story and your legislator(s) needs to hear it.
- Discuss your district needs in fiscal, but also (and most importantly) in student-centered terms.
- Key elements of your story include: how you used federal Covid relief funds, brief description of your district and your student population, your district budget needs, expression of support for SAA top budget priorities.
- Thank legislators for their service to Wisconsin citizens and encourage them to stand up for the needs of the children in your community.
- Send story to JFC members and your district's legislators.
- Copy your story to the SAA. We will post it as an example for your colleagues.



# Testifying at Budget Hearings

In April 2023, JFC will hold a series of public hearings across the state on the governor's budget proposal. The SAA will encourage members to testify in support of SAA state budget priorities.

Is it important for the SAA to be well-represented at the budget hearings?  
Why or why not?

What is it like to testify at the JFC hearings?



# Key Points to Remember

- It is very important for the SAA to be well-represented at the JFC budget hearings. Legislators will notice if our presence is weak.
- Testifying at the JFC hearings is a significant commitment of time.
- Your testimony will likely be a 2-minute version of your district budget story.
- SAA will help facilitate your testimony.
- Your presence/testimony may generate sidebar conversations with committee members.



# Who's Lobbying Who?

- Shortly after Governor Evers' introduction of his 2019-21 Executive Budget, GOP legislators sought to convince school superintendents and business managers that Evers' budget was “fiscally irresponsible” and “politically unrealistic.” We will likely see a similar scenario with the 2023-25 state budget.
- While our relationships with our GOP legislators are very important, clearly the “influence game” is double-edged.
- At least some of our members will need help recognizing and dealing with this reality during the upcoming budget session.



# Avoid the Trap and Pivot

- **Trap**: The Evers' budget plan is just another example of throwing huge sums of money at failed education policies for public schools. (This has already begun with GOP reaction to Evers' recent budget announcement).

What is your response (pivot)?

- **Trap**: If we gave you \$250/\$250 in increased general spending authority per pupil and a 32% reimbursement rate on special education, that would be better, right?

What is your pivot?



# Avoid the Trap and Pivot

- **Trap**: The Evers' budget plan is just another example of throwing huge sums of money at failed education policies for public schools. (This has already begun with GOP reaction to Evers' recent budget announcement).
- **Pivot**: The governor's plan addresses the extraordinary challenges schools currently face in meeting student needs. If you find that plan objectionable, what is your plan?
- **Trap**: If we got you \$250/\$250 in increased general spending authority per pupil and a 32% reimbursement rate on special education, that would be better, right?
- **Pivot**: That would fall short of the resources necessary to meet the educational needs of the children we serve in our district.



# More Budget Advocacy Tips

- The budget process is a long negotiation. Avoid “negotiating with ourselves”.
- Pressure and manipulation from legislators will get tough. They will try hard to divide us. Lean hard into our shared budget priorities.
- “State Budget Update” on every Board agenda during budget process.
- Schedule regular contacts with your legislator(s) during the budget process.

