

RESOLUTIONS ON “DECOUPLING”

This year’s Delegate Assembly will have a unique situation: two directly conflicting proposed resolutions on the same policy topic put before the body. These resolutions are resolutions 10 and 11 and can be found in the “2026 Delegate Assembly Packet,” also in this mailing.

Resolution 10 calls on the WASB to support the policy of “decoupling”. Resolution 11 calls on the WASB to oppose the policy of “decoupling” (or, in other words, calls on the WASB to support current law).

Delegate Assembly Floor Procedure

After careful review with our Parliamentarian, it was determined that the resolutions should be presented in this order; the resolution calling for a change in state law (10) being presented first, and the resolution calling for support of the status quo (11) following.

You may be wondering, if these resolutions take directly opposing stances on the same issue, what happens if they both are passed? **In short, both resolutions cannot be approved.** According to Robert’s Rules of Order Newly Revised, a main motion cannot be brought up again during the same meeting if it is in direct conflict with a motion that has already been adopted and is still in force. For more information or questions attend the Pre-Delegate Assembly Session.

If resolution 10 is approved by the Delegates, 11 is rendered moot and will be removed from the agenda. Should resolution 10 be rejected by the Delegates, the body will move on to resolution 11 with the opportunity to debate/amend/vote on that resolution. The situation could also arise where neither resolution is approved, in which case the WASB will have no institutional position on the process of decoupling (as is currently the case). **Amendments to either resolution that change the word “support” to “oppose” or vice versa, will be declared out of order.**

Decoupling can be a difficult policy to understand, particularly for newer board members who are not as familiar with school finance issues. To help provide clarity and a shared understanding of the topic, **we have provided a short summary of decoupling in the following two pages.**

UNDERSTANDING “DECOUPLING”

ALTERING FUNDING FOR THE PARENTAL CHOICE & INDEPENDENT CHARTER PROGRAMS

BACKGROUND CONTEXT

Wisconsin's voucher programs include (in chronological order) the **Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP)**, the **Racine Parental Choice Program (RPCP)**, the statewide **Wisconsin Parental Choice Program (WPCP)**, and the **Special Needs Scholarship Program (SNSP)**. The four programs were implemented at different times, and their funding mechanisms have changed over time.

Likewise, how **Independent Charter Schools** are funded depends on whether the authorizing entity had chartering authority prior to the 2015-17 budget act (2015 Act 55). Those prior to Act 55 are referred to as **“Legacy” authorizers** (UW-Milwaukee, the City of Milwaukee, and UW-Parkside) and those after Act 55 are **“New” authorizers** (the Director of the Office of Educational Opportunity (UW Madison), the Lac Courte Oreilles Ojibwe College, and the Waukesha County Executive).

HOW ARE THESE PROGRAMS CURRENTLY FUNDED?

Milwaukee Parental Choice Program & “Legacy” Ind. Charters - State Funded

The **MPCP** upon conception was initially funded by the state. For a time, it was shifted to a state-local cost-sharing method as the program grew. Now, once again, the program is funded exclusively by the state. This shift back to full state funding was made gradually over several years.

Payments for **“Legacy” Ind. Charter Schools** were previously a state-local cost share, however since the 2021-22 school year these programs were also shifted exclusively to state funding.

Racine/Statewide Parental Choice Programs, the Special Needs Scholarship Program & “New” Ind. Charter – Funded via State Aid Reductions to Public School Districts

Initially, the **RPCP** and **WPCP** programs began as state funded programs. However, as the two programs grew, they shifted funding mechanisms. The two programs, along with the **SNSP**, are now paid for by reducing the state aid of a participating pupil's resident school district (DPI makes these reductions before aid is sent), the resident school district is then allowed to replace the lost aid by charging property taxpayers. In the following year, school

districts count resident choice/ind. charter participants in their state aid calculations. This allows the district to offset some of the property tax impacts from the prior year.

Similarly, pupils attending a “**New**” **Ind. Charter School** are funded through a reduction in state aid from a pupil’s resident school district. That district is still able to count the pupil for revenue limit and general aid purposes. However, unlike the Racine, Statewide, and Special Needs Program, school districts cannot levy property taxpayers to replace the lost aid.

WHAT DOES “DECOUPLING” PROPOSE?

ALL Choice Program & Ind. Charter Payments Would Be Exclusively State Funded

Recent legislative proposals have proposed shifting the funding source of the RPCP, WPCP, SNSP choice programs and “new” independent charter school programs...

FROM:

a reduction to a school district’s state aid (with the ability of the school district to replace that aid in their property tax levy)

TO:

state budget dollars

→ The resident school district of the choice/charter pupil would no longer be able to count the pupil for the purposes of aid calculations or in their revenue limit and would no longer have a need to replace lost aid from property taxpayers.

In other words, decoupling would make all choice and ind. charter school payments completely funded by state budget dollars like MPCP and “Legacy” ind. charter payments are under current law.