

2014 Legislative Platform

The 2013 legislative session prioritized education, making a significant investment in students in early childhood, K-12 and higher education. SEE applauds the legislature for adding 1.5% to the basic formula in FY 14 and in FY 15, fully funding all-day kindergarten, and providing revenue to reduce the special education cross-subsidy beginning in FY15. However, one session cannot make up for over a decade of inadequate and inequitable school funding. *With the improving economy, the 2014 Legislative Session can continue making progress in its investment in Minnesota's K-12 public education system.*

- **Increase the basic formula to restore school funding and provide school districts with the flexibility to meet unfunded mandates.**
 - The Governor's Education Finance Working Group recommendations guided much of the 2013 legislative session. In 2014, the legislature must address the recommendation to increase the basic formula to account for the significant deterioration in school funding due to inflation over the past decade. The Working Group proposed an additional increase of 12.9% per pupil simply to provide districts with the same buying power they had in 2003.
 - Districts are facing numerous unfunded mandates including the implementation of the new teacher evaluation system, providing special education services and potentially implementing new anti-bullying policy.
 - The basic formula is crucial to all school districts, but especially to those school districts that do not generate considerable revenue through categorical formulas or are not able to pass large referendum levies.

- **Continue to make voter-approved school levies more affordable in low property wealth districts by increasing equalization aid.**
 - The 2013 legislature dedicated \$70 million in state aid to significantly reduce the cost to property tax payers on the first \$300 per pupil of operating referendum in low property wealth districts.
 - The average referendum in the state is over \$1,000 per pupil. Until equalization aid is increased to cover more of the average school referendum, property taxpayers in low property wealth districts will still pay two or three times as much for the same school levy revenue for their students than taxpayers in high property wealth districts.
 - New location equity funding is subtracted from the referendum allowance and will permit high property wealth districts to seek \$212 or \$424 revenue increases through voter-approved levies; thereby increasing the disparity between low and high revenue school districts
 - The property taxpayer cost of voter-approved bonds for capital projects also varies greatly based on a school district's property wealth. Unlike referendum equalization, the legislature did not address this issue in the last session. Like referendum equalization, debt service equalization for bonds needs to be increased.

- **Create an ongoing bonding program where school districts can access state bonds to upgrade existing facilities, technology, building safety and energy efficiency.**
 - With aging school buildings and the increase of mandated online testing, school districts are seeing their energy costs and technology needs skyrocket. However, many school districts do not have the tax base to fund these needs through the current system of voter-approved local bonding.
 - An ongoing state bonding program would allow the neediest school districts to make necessary upgrades in their facilities without overburdening local taxpayers. The state can assist more and more school districts over time by making the program ongoing.

SEE Districts
Albany
Albert Lea
Annandale
Anoka-Hennepin
Austin
Belle Plaine
Big Lake
Braham
Brainerd
Buffalo
Byron
Cambridge-Isanti
Cannon Falls
Centennial
Central
Chisago Lakes
Dassel-Cokato
Delano
East Central
Eden Valley-Watkins
Elk River
Faribault
Forest Lake
Fridley
Hinckley-Finlayson
Howard Lake-
Waverly-Winsted
Hutchinson
Jordan
Kasson-Mantorville
Kimball
Lake City
LaCrescent-Hokah
Litchfield
Maple Lake
Medford
Melrose
Milaca
Monticello
Mora
New London-Spicer
New Prague
North Branch
Northfield
Ogilvie
Owatonna
Paynesville
Pine City
Pine River-Backus
Princeton
Prior Lake-Savage
Rockford
Rocori
Roseau
Rosemount-Apple
Valley-Eagan
Royalton
Rush City
Sartell-St. Stephen
Sauk Rapids-Rice
St. Francis
St. Michael-Albertville
Stewartville
Stillwater
Waconia