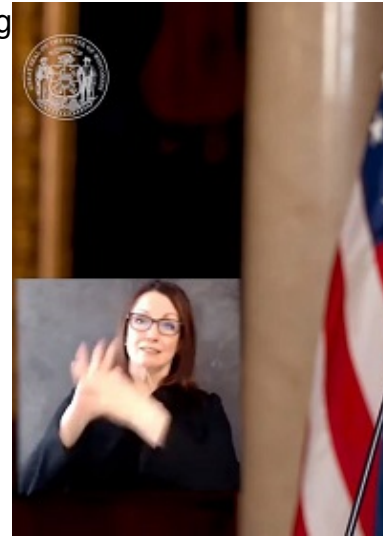


Governor Signs 2023-25 Biennial Budget

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<http://newiproggressive.com/images/stories/S5/tony-evers-s-sos-2022-s450.jpg>



Gov. Evers enacts budget with over 50 line-item vetoes to provide child care and housing grants, target tax relief to working families, among others.

MADISON— Gov. Tony Evers Wednesday enacted the 2023-25 biennial budget with improvements by using his broad, constitutional veto authority, providing a historic increase in support to local communities for the first time in a decade, investing more than \$1 billion in public education, making one of the largest state investments in workforce housing, investing in infrastructure, supporting Wisconsin farmers, providing tax relief to working families, among several other critical priorities.

In doing so, Gov. Evers today also gave the Legislature a “second chance” to complete its work on the biennial budget, calling the Legislature’s final budget that was sent back to the governor “imperfect and incomplete” for failing to meaningfully address the state’s ongoing workforce challenges, including an impending fiscal cliff for the state’s child care industry, even as the state has the largest surplus in state history.

Highlights of the 2023-25 biennial budget and Gov. Evers’ line-item vetoes are provided below. Excerpts from Gov. Evers’ veto message:

“We have gotten to work these last four years making smart, strategic investments—and our economy shows it. So, we began this biennial budget process with historic opportunity, and with it, historic responsibility—not to be careless or reckless, but to save where we can and stay well within our means while still investing in needs that have long been neglected to protect the future we are working hard to build together.

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"In addition to the critical efforts to expand access to affordable housing statewide, address PFAS in our water, and make historic investments in communities across our state, I am also pleased this budget provides substantial and well-deserved increases in compensation for correctional officers, youth counselors, psychiatric care technicians, assistant district attorneys, and public defenders; uses our surplus funds to support our Capital Budget to reduce the need to authorize new bonding and future debt service costs; provides sizeable investments in tourism marketing and advertising initiatives; and includes the resources necessary to continue our work fixing our roads and making sure our infrastructure is built for a workforce and economy of the 21st century.□□

"But even as I am glad the Legislature joined me in making critical investments in several key areas, the fact remains that this budget, while now improved through strategic vetoes, remains imperfect and incomplete.□

...□

"In many ways, Republicans in the Legislature have failed to meet this historic moment, sending my budget back to my desk absent critical investments in key areas that they know—and publicly acknowledge—are essential to the success of our state, all while providing no real justification, substantive debate, or any meaningful alternative. That decision is, to put it simply, an abdication of duty.

"State funding for high-speed broadband. Affordable and accessible child care. Substantial categorical aid increases for our schools. Fully funded universal school breakfasts and lunches. Investing in our University of Wisconsin and Wisconsin Technical College Systems. Targeted tax relief for caregivers, parents, seniors, and veterans and their spouses. BadgerCare expansion. Expanded paid family leave. Legalizing and taxing marijuana much like alcohol. Investments in community-driven solutions to our workforce challenges. These aren't controversial concepts; my budgets have always been about pragmatism and solutions, not wish lists or politics, from the beginning.

"I understand that, in light of these short-sighted decisions, there are those who would have me veto this budget in its entirety—to send the Legislature back to the drawing board to start

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from scratch. Vetoing this budget in full would mean abandoning priorities and ideas that I have spent four years advocating for; it would mean leaving schools and communities in the lurch after rightfully securing historic increases for the first time in years; it would mean forgoing the first real and substantive Republican effort to address PFAS after years of inaction; it would mean forfeiting the one of the largest investments in workforce housing in state history; it would mean deserting our justice system and state workforces, our tourism industries, our farmers and producers, and our veterans, among others.

“While Republicans in the Legislature might be perfectly comfortable abdicating the duty we share with the historic opportunity and responsibility before us in pursuit of political favor and partisan praise, I am not.”

“My allegiance has been and always will be to the people of this state—Wisconsinites to whom I have pledged to always try do the right thing and to make difficult decisions when it matters most. That pledge and my obligation as Governor are why I am enacting this budget with substantial improvements today.

...”

“Of urgent concern to me as governor is that while this budget makes some critical investments to help support some portions of our state’s workforce, Republicans returned this budget to me without critical components of my comprehensive plan to address the workforce challenges that have already plagued our state for generations and will continue to without further action.



“The Legislature must make the substantial investments necessary to stabilize our state’s child care industry and ensure child care is affordable and accessible so we can keep parents in our workforce. Failing to do so will cause calamitous consequences for employers, our workforce, and our state’s economy. And, yes, that means the Legislature should also expand paid family leave, invest state resources in high-speed internet, provide targeted support for new, innovative, and high-need areas and industries across our workforce, and make substantial investments in education at every level, including our higher education institutions. These efforts, among other key provisions I included in my proposed biennial budget, are essential for maintaining our economic momentum and retaining and recruiting talented workers across our state.

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“So, today, I am giving the Legislature a second chance. I am using my broad, constitutional veto authority to ensure ample state resources are readily available for the Legislature to complete their work on this budget—to do the right thing, to rise to meet this moment of historic opportunity and responsibility, and to focus on passing real solutions for the urgent challenges facing our state.” ☐ ☐

HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE 2023-25 BIENNIAL BUDGET

A Generational Increase in Shared Revenue for Local Communities

This budget provides a \$275 million boost in state aid to localities by funding the supplemental county and municipal aid program created by [2023 Wisconsin Act 12](#). Act 12, a historic, bipartisan compromise, addresses the dire need for increased shared revenue and funding for local emergency services. This momentous investment in local communities across Wisconsin includes a \$68 million increase in aid for counties and a \$207 million increase in aid for municipalities in fiscal year 2024-2025, representing a 36 percent increase over current county and municipal aid entitlements.

Act 12 also provides additional aid to counties and municipalities in fiscal year 2025-26 and beyond by linking both current and supplemental county and municipal aid to the growth rate in the state sales tax and seeks to incentivize local governments to provide the most efficient and cost-effective ways to deliver county and municipal services by providing up to \$300 million in innovation grants.

The budget also provides \$173.8 million in aid payments to local governments to hold them harmless from Act 12’s repeal of the burdensome personal property tax.

Investing in What’s Best for Kids



The budget, as returned by Republicans in the Legislature, falls well short of Gov. Evers’ proposed biennial budget’s level of spending for K-12 schools. Nevertheless, the 2023-25 budget as enacted builds upon Gov. Evers’ historic progress toward fully funding public schools by providing an overall increase of nearly \$1.2 billion in spendable authority for public school districts. This increase will be more than ten times larger than the increase in spendable authority for public school districts in the 2021-23 biennium. The governor’s vetoes also ensure our school districts have predictable, long-term revenue limit spending authority increases to help meet rising costs for the foreseeable future.

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The 2023-25 biennial budget increases the level of state support from 67.8 percent in fiscal year 2022-23 to an estimated 68.8 percent in fiscal year 2023-24 and 69.4 percent in fiscal year 2024-25. These will be the highest levels of state support for school districts since the calculation was initiated in fiscal year 1996-97 under the state's former "two-thirds" funding goal.

This increase is also generated by a \$325 per pupil increase on revenue limits in each fiscal year, in addition to an increase in the low revenue ceiling from \$10,000 to \$11,000 per pupil in the first year of the biennium. This is the largest increase in statewide revenue limit authority since revenue limits were first imposed on K-12 schools in 1993-94, and it is permanent and base-building.

Further, these record-high per pupil revenue limit increases also have the potential to take the burden off community members when it comes to school funding, as it alleviates the need for districts to seek operating referenda. Additionally, estimates show that more than half of the state's 421 school districts would be able to use the low revenue ceiling increase in fiscal year 2024-25, meaning that countless students across the state will be able to attend schools that can better provide the staff, facilities, and resources they need to succeed.

This budget also:

- Provides \$97 million GPR over the biennium to achieve a special education reimbursement rate of 33.3 percent each year, which is the highest reimbursement rate our state has seen in over 20 years;
- Invests \$4.6 million GPR over the biennium for high-cost special education aid, increasing the reimbursement rate of these programs from its current 39.5 percent to 50 percent by the end of the biennium. This aid helps school districts pay a portion of their eligible special education costs for pupils with specific and elevated educational needs;
- Sets aside \$50 million to improve reading and literacy outcomes for K-12 students; and
- Provides \$30 million to continue support for school-based mental health services modeled on the governor's successful "Get Kids Ahead" Initiative.

Expanding Access to Affordable Housing

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