



SCHOOL CHOICE Advocate

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Three Milwaukee Senators Vote to End Choice; They Hope Others Will Save the Program

For the second straight year, three Democratic Senators from Milwaukee have voted to support Wausau Sen. Russell Decker's plan to gut the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP).

The plan to begin dismantling choice was approved April 4 in the Senate Democratic Caucus's 2002-2003 budget adjustment proposal. None of Milwaukee's four Democratic Senators voiced opposition. Had they been forceful in opposing the plan, it could have been rejected in their caucus.

When the budget plan came to the Senate floor on April 5, Milwaukee Senator Gary George, a candidate for Governor, did not join his three Democratic colleagues in voting for the budget and its cuts to the school choice program.

Standing up for the choice parents



Rep. Antonio Riley



Sen. Gary George

The *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* quoted George as saying, "it's regrettable that the (choice) families become fodder in the [budget] war." George called the Senate plan "obviously punitive." He said Senator Decker was "especially insensitive to the needs of minority children." George said the plan to end choice is "unacceptable to the Assembly and the governor."

The *Journal Sentinel* said Milwaukee Senator

Gwen Moore voted for the Senate budget but opposed the cuts in school choice. "I personally think that the proposals to end the parental choice program were too severe and too immediate. I think it will get to the conference committee and be taken out. That would be my hope.... I don't think it will survive the final package."

Despite also voting for the Senate plan, the *Journal Sentinel* said Milwaukee Sen. Richard Grobschmidt "expressed concerns about ... cuts to school choice and stressed that the budget process is far from over." Grobschmidt said, "I have not in the past been a supporter of school choice. But it is currently in place, and it would be hard at this point to basically eliminate the program."

Senator Brian Burke is the third Milwaukee Senator to vote for the budget plan that includes an end to choice. Burke, who is running for State Attorney General, has voted inconsistently on school choice.

On April 5, State Rep. Antonio Riley (D-Milwaukee), issued a statement strongly criticizing the Senate Democratic action. Riley has been an unwavering supporter of the choice program. 🎓

Hoping others will save choice



Sen. Brian Burke



Sen. Gwen Moore



Sen. Richard Grobschmidt

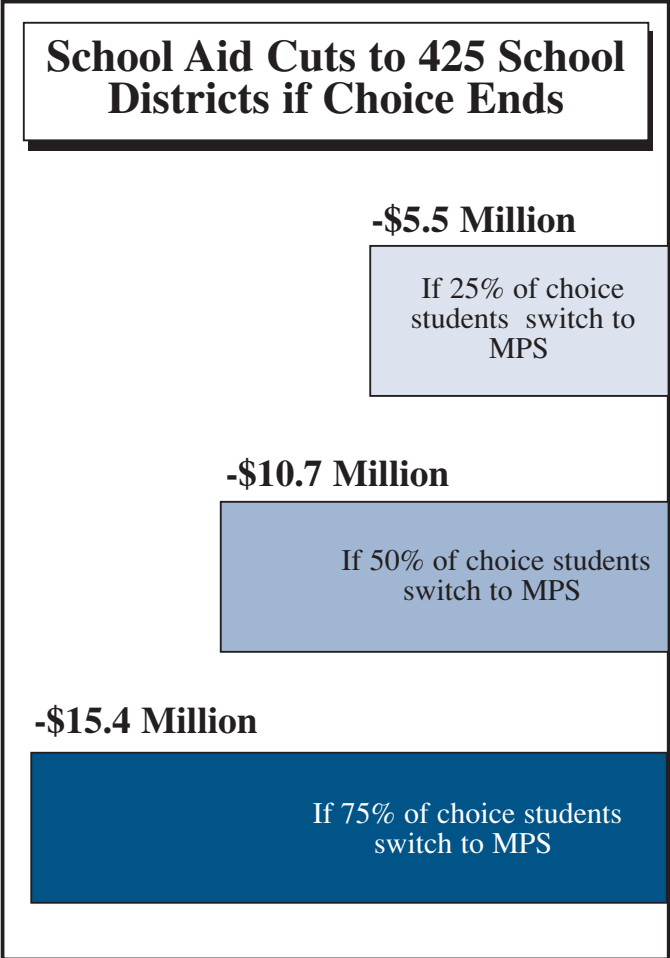
How Much Will Senator Russell Decker Cut Your District's State School Aid?

Four hundred twenty-five school districts will lose millions in state school aid if a plan to end the Milwaukee Parental Choice Program (MPCP) is fully implemented, according to the non-partisan Legislative Fiscal Bureau (LFB).

The Wisconsin State Senate on April 5 approved Sen. Russell Decker's (D-Wausau) plan to dismantle the MPCP. The program allows 10,882 low-income children in the Milwaukee Public Schools (MPS) district to attend a private school of their choice.

Last year, the Fiscal Bureau estimated the state aid impact of ending the MPCP. Under all scenarios analyzed, "aid to MPS would have increased [and] aid to the other 425 districts would have decreased." (9/27/01 memo to Rep. Antonio Riley from Bob Lang, LFB. For full document, see www.schoolchoiceinfo.org/hot_topics/pdf/69.pdf.)

Ending choice cuts aid to non-Milwaukee districts because the state pays 83% of the cost of an MPS student, compared to 55% of the cost of a choice student. The actual reduction to the 425 districts would depend on how many choice students transfer to MPS. Aid cuts to those districts could range from \$5.5 million to \$15.4 million a year (see chart). ↗



Source: Legislative Fiscal Bureau

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