



BOARD OF EDUCATION

Johnny Winston, Jr., President Lawrie Kobza, Vice President Shaw Vang, Clerk Carol Carstensen, Treasurer Lucy Mathiak, Member Ruth Roberts, Member Arlene Silveira, Member

October 16, 2006

Dear Members of the Wisconsin Legislature:

Our state and nation have been staggered by the recent incidents of violence in our schools. Ensuring the safety of students and staff is one of the most critical functions of any school. Legislative responses to violence should be reasonable, practical, and ultimately, must improve safety.



To that end, I urge you to co-sponsor Rep. Spencer Black's measure to remove school security improvements from under the revenue limits when he re-introduces the measure next January. The proposal places fiscal limits on security-related expenditures and offers legislative oversight through the rule-making process.

In Madison, we have one Educational Resource Officer (member of the Madison Police Department) at each of our four high schools, but they are only in a select number of our 11 middle schools. We have a small crew of 14 security assistants monitoring the activities of over 13,000 middle and high school students.

In our on-going examination of safety and security issues, we've identified the need for more video monitoring in remote areas of old school buildings and outside of schools; the need for expanded staff development opportunities for conflict resolution techniques; better two-way communication devices for administrative staff and security personnel; and, better door locks at older schools are just a few of our critical needs.

Unfortunately, under revenue limits, safety and security compete with educational needs. It is a situation that should be changed. Please consider Rep. Black's proposal to improve safety in Wisconsin's schools. While it may seem obvious, little learning can take place in environments where people feel unsafe. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Johnny Winston, Jr.

President, Madison Board of Education