

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Governor Scott Walker Signs 2015-2017 State Budget, Lowers Property Taxes Again**

**Madison** – Today, Governor Scott Walker signed the 2015-2017 State Budget into law, keeping his promise to lower the tax burden for the hardworking taxpayers of Wisconsin.

“With this budget, taxpayers come first,” said Governor Walker. “Property taxes will be cut for an unprecedented six years in a row, while additional money is invested in K-12 education and expanding educational choices for parents and their students. For the first time in University of Wisconsin System history, undergraduate tuition will be frozen for four years straight to help make college affordable for Wisconsin's working families.

“We continue our support for seniors, needy families, and children by adding \$600 million dollars to Medicaid. We invest in veterans services, adding millions more to worker training and workforce development programs, and implementing programs to help people transition from government dependence and welfare into the workforce. The budget I signed today again brings real reform to Wisconsin and allows everyone more opportunity for a brighter future.”

The reforms in this budget continue to put the hardworking taxpayers and citizens of this great state back in control. This budget focuses on growth and opportunity for all, while implementing common sense reforms to ensure state government is more effective, more efficient, and more accountable to the public.

“Wisconsin’s fiscal house is in great shape,” Governor Walker continued. “Due to our responsible budgeting, new bonding will be at the lowest level in 20 years. Moody’s moved our outlook for the state’s credit rating from ‘stable’ to ‘positive.’ And our total outstanding state debt level has gone down.”

Some highlights of the 2015-2017 State Budget include:

### Property Tax Relief

Prior to Governor Walker taking office, property taxes on a median value home had increased 27 percent over a decade. This budget will lower property taxes for the fifth and sixth year in a row. Since 2011, the typical homeowner has seen a decline of over \$130 on his or her tax bill, or about 4.4 percent. That’s real money going back into the pockets of hard-working taxpayers in Wisconsin.

### Growing Our Economy

Governor Walker's 2015-17 Biennial Budget continues our commitment to investing in key economic development initiatives aimed at improving Wisconsin's business climate and encouraging entrepreneurship and innovation. This budget builds upon the achievements of Governor Walker's first term and provides funding for:

- **Business Development Tax Credit** – Combines and streamlines existing tax credits to provide greater simplicity and flexibility in business tax incentives. This new credit will receive \$17 million in 2016 and \$22 million in 2017 and beyond to stimulate job creation, improve employee training and retention, and incentivize company investments in Wisconsin.
- **Fabrication Laboratory Grant Program** – Allocates \$500,000 for WEDC to award grants for purchases of equipment used in fabrication laboratories for K-12 students.
- **Confluence Project** – Provides \$15 million in matched funds for the Eau Claire Area Confluence Arts Center, promoting economic development in downtown Eau Claire and the greater Chippewa region. Confluence Project fundraisers must raise their entire portion of the project cost before state money will be released.

#### Developing Our Workforce

The Biennial Budget recognizes that our workforce is critical in spurring Wisconsin's economic growth. The budget builds on our priorities with significant investments in workforce development and training programs that will help match our workforce with the jobs of today and tomorrow. It includes important **Workforce Readiness Initiatives** to help to move Wisconsinites from government dependence to true independence:

- **Helping people move from government dependence to independence:** Implements drug screening, testing, and treatment mechanisms to increase workforce readiness of individuals receiving unemployment insurance or public assistance benefits in certain work-based programs at the Departments of Children and Families, Workforce Development, and Health Services. Those who fail a drug test will be offered the opportunity to participate in drug treatment and given an opportunity for job training.
- Continues \$5 million annually for the **Transform Milwaukee Jobs Program** and extends the program to Racine, Beloit, and high-need rural areas of the state.
- Continues funding for **Wisconsin Fast Forward** at \$15 million over the biennium.
- Continues the increased funding amounts for vocational rehabilitation and apprenticeship that were enacted last legislative session. These programs have impacted thousands of job seekers with disabilities and youths looking for access to education and training programs.

#### Transforming Education

Every child – regardless of their zip code – should have access to a great education. Our reforms have saved school districts hundreds of millions of dollars and allowed each district to put more money directly into our children's classrooms. The 2015-17 Biennial Budget continues to invest in and transform education here in Wisconsin by increasing state aid and expanding education options for parents and students:

- **Increased State Support for Schools** – Provides \$105.6 million in 2016-17 for the school levy tax credit and \$108.1 million in FY 2016-17 for equalization aids, while maintaining revenue limits to ensure continued property tax relief.
- **Per Pupil Aid** – Provides \$126.8 million in the first school year and \$211 million in the second for per pupil aid outside of revenue caps.
- **Expands School Choice** – Provides parents in any school district with the opportunity to participate in the statewide school choice program by phasing out the cap on the number of school choice participants.
- **Provides additional resources for rural schools** by increasing funding for:
  - **The Sparsity Aid Program** by \$8.4 million over the biennium.
  - **The High-Cost Pupil Transportation** categorical aid program by \$5 million over the biennium.
  - The reimbursement rate under the pupil transportation aid program for districts transporting children more than 12 miles will be raised from \$275 to \$300 per pupil.
- **Teacher Licensure** –Expands the pool of licensed teacher options for schools by creating alternative pathways to allow a candidate with real life experience to gain a teacher license. This will help rural areas of need and have a larger focus on technical education courses.

Our budget also works to make higher education more accessible for Wisconsin’s working families and students:

- **Empowers a stronger UW System:**
  - Positions the University of Wisconsin System to maximize its ability to remain a world leader in research and instruction by giving it greater flexibilities to manage compensation, human resources, procurement, capital projects, and other areas.
  - Continues to make attending a University of Wisconsin institution affordable for Wisconsin’s hardworking students and parents by extending the tuition freeze for an additional two years. For the first time in University of Wisconsin System history, undergraduate tuition will be frozen for four years straight.

### Reforming Government

This budget ensures state government is working within the means of taxpayers and is more efficient, more effective, and more accountable. Governor Walker’s 2015-17 Biennial Budget also provides more flexibility to local governments by repealing another costly and burdensome state mandate:

- **Prevailing Wage Repeal** –This depression-era prevailing wage mandate artificially increases the cost of construction. Under the repeal, local governments are exempted from this mandate, therefore saving millions for our schools, technical colleges, and other local governments.
- **Lean Government Initiative** – Creates the Lean Government Initiative at the Department of Administration (DOA) in order to continue enhancing lean initiatives and finding efficiencies across state government. The initiative continues

improvement efforts to eliminate waste, save time and cost across agencies, and improve government services for citizens of Wisconsin, as well as for state employees.

The 2015-17 State Budget will go into effect Tuesday, July 14. Governor Walker's veto message is available [online](#).

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