

WASBO's

Money Talks

Big Trends for 2026-27

June 26, 2026



Our Panel

- We're not lobbyists or attorneys, just WASBO colleagues
- We share non-partisan, veteran perspectives on how to navigate the financial challenges present in your school district
- Opinions expressed are our own, not necessarily those of our employers (but we're usually right)



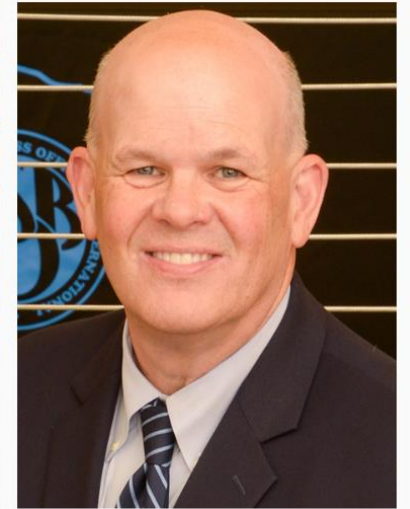
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WASBO Board Treasurer



**Mike
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WASBO Executive Director

June 2026

**Topics to Listen to While
Posting Journal Entries:**

- 1. Andy Grows Up and
Leaves Us**
 - 2. Big Trends for 2026-27**
 - 3. Summer Plans**
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Ten Trends for 2026-27

Student-to-Staff Ratio Dilemma

What's really going on here?

- It's not more classroom teachers
- Higher student needs (SPED, ELL, Mental Health)
- Staffing levels don't shrink at same exact pace as enrollment
- Layoffs are difficult and unpopular
- <https://wispolicyforum.org/research/more-k-12-staff-for-fewer-students/>



MORE K-12 STAFF FOR FEWER STUDENTS

Despite the continuing drop in students enrolled in Wisconsin schools, the numbers of schools and K-12 staff have not followed the same path. Lagging funding as a result of enrollment declines and state revenue caps means districts will likely face tough financial decisions around closing schools, reducing their workforce, or cutting educational programming while also supporting some increased student needs.

April 13, 2026 | Health Care, Issues, Press Releases

Egregious Healthcare Costs: Wisconsin's Economic Disadvantage

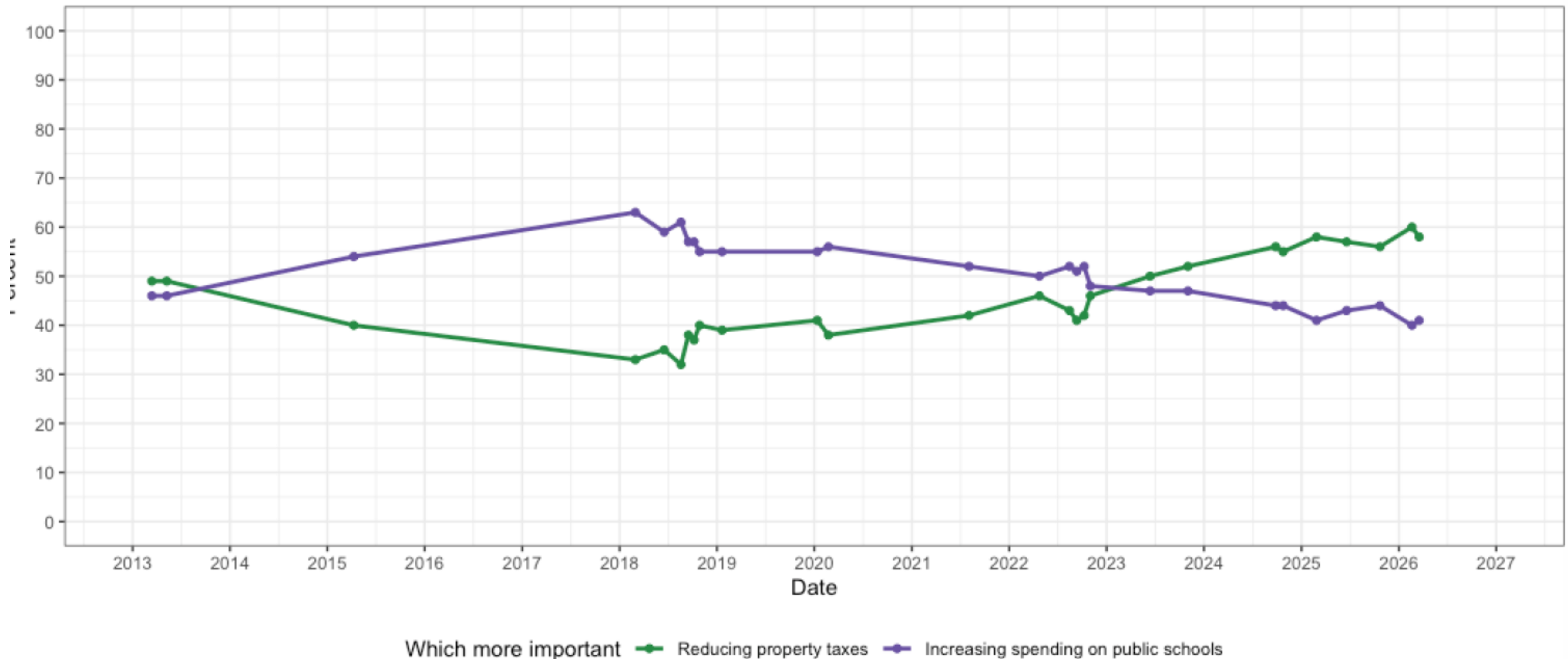
Health Insurance Costs Skyrocket

"I don't believe that man's ever been to medical school!" — Buzz Lightyear

<https://www.wmc.org/press-releases/egregious-healthcare-costs-wisconsins-economic-disadvantage/>

Operational Referenda and Voter Fatigue

Property tax or school funding trend
Among Wisconsin registered voters

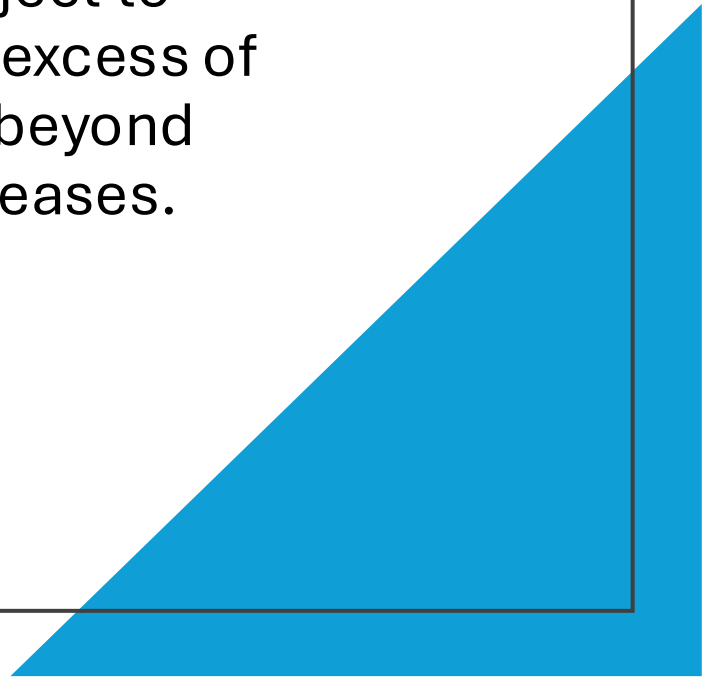


Individual School Building Closures; District Consolidation or Dissolution

From 2011 to 2026, the number of public schools in Wisconsin decreased 3.2%, from 2,202 to 2,132 schools. This rate includes a 4.1% decrease among traditional (not charter) public schools, which was partially offset by a net increase in the number of charter schools across the state.

Inflationary Budget Stress

School districts are major buyers of health insurance, utilities and fuel, all of which are subject to sharp price increases in excess of overall inflation, and far beyond recent revenue limit increases.



The Politics of Staff Reductions

Staff reductions are difficult and unpopular. Before ACT 10, layoffs by strict seniority order was the norm. In the absence of that established process, flawed as it was, layoffs are now subject to claims of targeting, discrimination, retribution, etc.

Special Ed Subsidy (F10 to F27)

- A bipartisan \$1.8 billion budget surplus deal in Wisconsin collapsed after the state Senate unexpectedly rejected the package. Negotiated by Democratic Governor [Tony Evers](#) and GOP legislative leaders, the bill failed when all 15 Senate Democrats and three Republicans voted against it.
- **School Aid:** \$600 million for K-12 public schools, split between special education reimbursements and general aid intended to lower property taxes.
- **Political Opposition:** Democrats argued the bill was financially irresponsible and were frustrated by a lack of involvement in negotiations.
- **Note:**
A [Marquette Law School Poll](#) indicated 80% of Wisconsin adults supported passing the package.

School Funding Lawsuit

<https://wasbo.com/lawsuit>

Is Wisconsin meeting its constitutional obligation to K-12 students?

Inside the *Wisconsin PTA* school funding lawsuit

1. Since statehood nearly 180 years ago, the Wisconsin Constitution has mandated the creation and maintenance of tuition-free public schools across our State with a character of instruction as uniform as practicable.

2. Through those public schools, our Constitution guarantees every child in Wisconsin, ages four to twenty, the fundamental right of access to an equal opportunity for a sound basic education, without tuition.

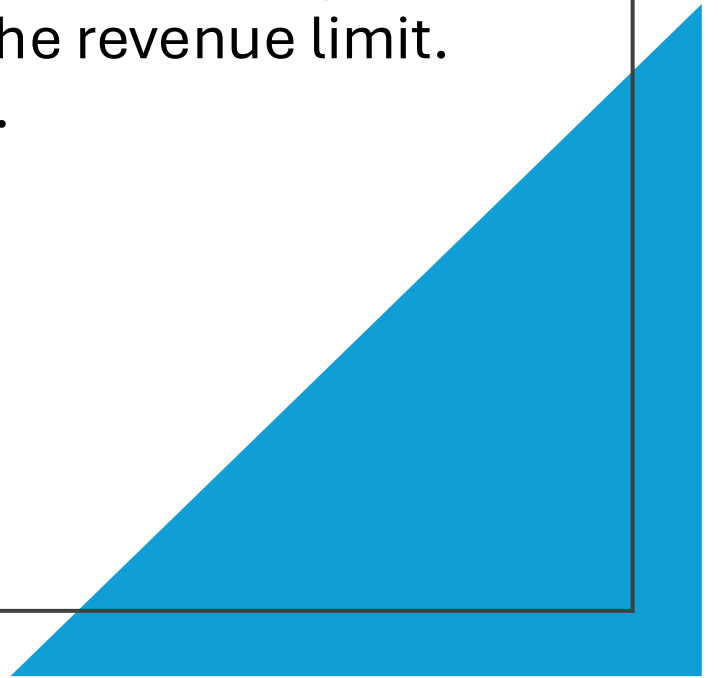


Operating Deficits on the Rise

- According to data provided by DPI, 40% of Wisconsin school districts ran a budget deficit last year (2024-25). This is a trend to monitor as a sign of financial stress.
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Spending Gaps b/w Haves and Have Nots

- Under current conditions, revenue growth is largely determined by the ability to gain voter approval for referenda to exceed the revenue limit. In too many cases, this is simply not politically viable.



Congrats Andy!

- *"I can't stop Andy from growing up. But I wouldn't miss it for the world." — Woody*

- *See You Next Time:*

- *Friday, August 28*

