

Ripon Area School District
News Release

October 27, 2009

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For Immediate Release

**School Board Votes to Invest in the Education of Ripon Children by
Filling the Gap Left by State Aid Cuts**

The Ripon Board of Education voted at its special meeting on October 26 to invest in education and preserve the quality of Ripon schools by increasing local property taxes to fill the gap left by the state's reduction in state aid for the 2009-10 school year. The amount of the school budget supported by state funds has fallen by 9% during the past three years as the Governor and legislature have retreated from their promise of two-thirds funding. The gap created by this withdrawal of state aid has been shifted to local taxpayers through the school district's property tax.

As a result of the decrease in state aid, the percent that property taxes will be raised is more than double the amount than if the percent of the budget covered by state aid had remained the same as last year. The 12.31% increase in the tax levy translates to an increase of the equalized mill rate of \$1.18 per thousand dollars of equalized property value from last year's equalized mill rate of \$9.20. The owner of a property with an equalized value of \$100,000 will pay \$118 more this year in school taxes as the equalized mill rate rises to \$10.38 for the 2009-10 budget.

The actual amount of the mill rates on local tax bills will vary based on local property values in the eleven municipalities that comprise the school district. Because those municipalities had changes in property values ranging from a 4% decrease to a 15% increase, the effect on local property tax bills will vary considerably.

In the past three years the school district has had to reduce its operating budget by a total of \$1.2 million dollars in annual expenditures to stay within the revenue limits mandated by the state. At the same time the state decreased its share of the local school budget by 9%. State support has dropped from 78% of Ripon's revenue limit budget to 69% in the past three years. Consequently, as the state shifted costs for schools to the local property tax the equalized mill rate for local property taxes has increased.

"The governor and Democratic-led state legislature reneged on their promise to fund two-thirds of school costs and left local school boards with no way to fulfill their responsibility to operate quality schools except to raise property taxes," explained Ripon Superintendent Richard Zimman. "The people we elected to govern our state broke their promises and shifted school costs to local property taxes where the school boards would be blamed rather than the governor and state legislators who caused the problem. Those politicians broke promises to communities and put the future of our children in harm's way because they refused to make the tough choices in Madison. Why should this year's children receive less of an education than last year's children just because our politicians don't want to stand by their commitments?"

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Although the calculation of the 2009-10 school district budget and tax levy is now over, the work on the 2010-11 budget is just beginning. Preliminary forecasts show Ripon will need another major budget cut to stay within state-mandated revenue limits, and the percent of the budget supported by state aid will likely continue to be reduced. Ripon's Budget Planning Team is expected to give its first report to the school board on the 2010-11 budget at its November 16 meeting.

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