

# Ripon Area School District

Press Release  
October 28, 2008

## For Immediate Release

### **School Board Cuts Tax Mill Rate for 2008-09**

The Ripon Board of Education voted at its October 27 meeting to cut the equalized mill rate by six cents (\$0.06) for the property tax bills that will be sent out in December. The equalized mill rate of \$9.20 represents the amount of tax per one thousand dollars of equalized property valuation in the Ripon Area School District. This year's reduction in the equalized mill rate is the fifth time in seven years that the rate has decreased and represents a \$2.64 cut for property owners during that time which translates to a \$264 decrease in taxes for a property with an equalized valuation of \$100,000.

Wisconsin's school funding law contains revenue limit provisions that restrict school boards from raising budgets by more than a rate determined by inflation and the district's school-aged population. After the budget is determined, the amount of state aid for property tax relief is calculated with a formula that estimates the equalized value of property per student in each district. This calculation is considered a measure of the relative wealth of the district's population and its need for state support to ensure that all students in Wisconsin receive a comparable educational opportunity. Ripon's state aid for 2008-09 is 67% of the budget.

Since 1993 the state has operated under the current school funding formula that is causing most of the state's 426 school districts to make significant budgetary cuts each year. This is a result of the revenue limit law that restricts budgets from growing to cover increasing costs. Ripon's revenue limit for the 2008-09 budget is a 2.9% increase at a time when costs are exceeding that amount. The majority of the district's budget is for wages and benefits, and another state law mandates that teachers receive a compensation increase of no less than 3.8% each year.

The state's school funding formula has caused the Ripon Area School District to cut \$328,000 from last year's budget and an additional \$342,000 from the current school year budget to meet the revenue limit law. These cuts have included eliminating teaching positions, an elementary school librarian position, new textbook purchases, new computer purchases, mentors for new teachers, and staff training. The amount to be cut from next year's budget is currently being calculated.

"It is frustrating for staff and parents to hear that tax rates are decreasing at the same time we need more money each year just to keep the quality program we currently have in place, but that's the way Wisconsin's school funding law works. It has been shown many times that education is the best economic development tool available, but state law is pushing us to increase class sizes, cut programs, and rely on old textbooks and computers," stated Richard Zimman, the Ripon superintendent of schools.

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