
Session Preview

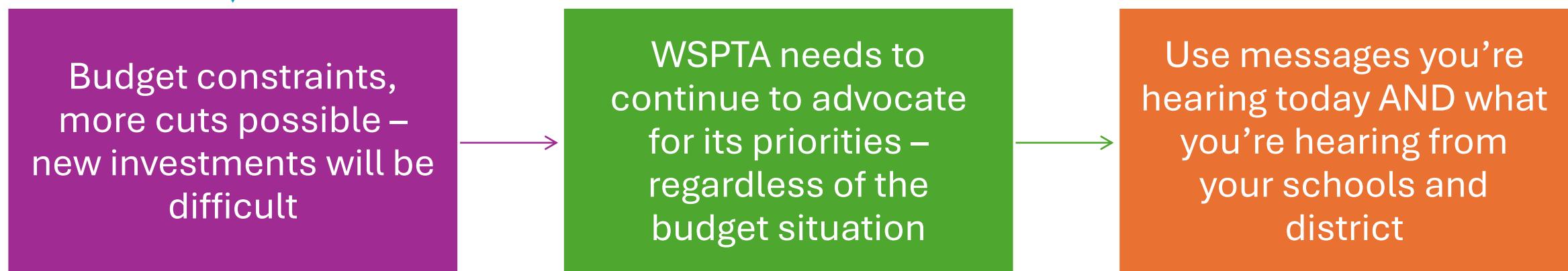
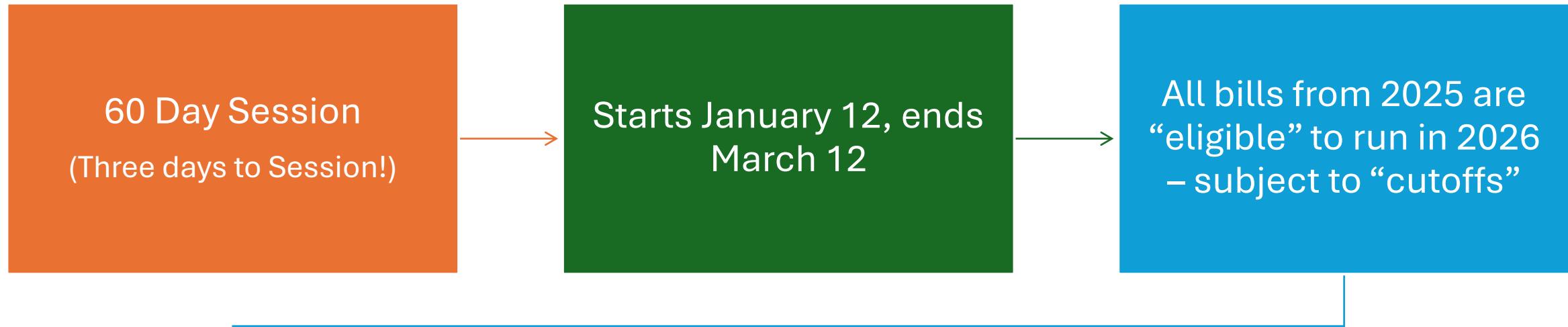
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2026 Legislative Session Reminders



WSPTA adopted a two-year set of priorities in October 2024 – start of the 2025-27 biennium

Added an “Also supported” in 2025 to Restore Funding for Education and Wrap Around Supports

Reminder: Resolutions and Legislative Principles are foundational and help guide how WSPTA engages during session

Legislative Priorities



Top 5 Legislative Priorities for 2025 – 2026

Closing the Funding Gaps

Washington State PTA shall advocate for legislation, policies, and budgets that ensure the financial stability of all school districts, by prioritizing K-12 education in the state's operating budget, and by closing existing gaps in basic education funding for MSOC (Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs), special education services, and student transportation, so that state funding reflects and keeps pace with actual costs.

Addressing the Student Mental Health Crisis

Washington State PTA shall support legislation or policies that ensure all students have access to the behavioral and mental health resources and preventative measures they need to thrive, including funding for:

- Reduced ratios of students to mental health professionals
- Programs and incentives to recruit, train, and retain mental health professionals
- Resources to assist families
- Training and support for educators and administrators

Addressing Funding, Inclusion, and Supports in Special Education

Washington State PTA shall advocate for legislation or policies that:

- Fully fund special education services including eliminating the cap
- Simplify the safety net reimbursement process
- Address the statewide special education staffing shortage
- Implement inclusionary practices while continuing specially designed instruction and accommodations when beneficial
- Address disproportional identification, referrals, and discipline
- Provide training in best practices for student and classroom support
- Ban isolation and reduce restraint of all students

Preventing and Reducing Gun Violence and Suicide

Washington State PTA shall advocate for legislation or policies that prevent and reduce gun violence and suicide including:

- Fund school-based mental health services
- Require permits for firearm purchases
- Incentivize safe storage of firearms and medications
- Restrict bulk weapons purchases
- Prohibit firearms in sensitive places including parks and public buildings
- Fund community-based prevention and intervention programs

Expanding School Construction Funding Options

Washington State PTA shall advocate for legislation or policies that:

- Increase overall state funding and funding options for school construction projects and improvements

Reminder about Big 3 actions in 2025

- Special education - \$331 million for 2025-27
 - Removed the cap on enrollment of special education students
 - Increased and simplified the multiplier of the Basic Education rate
 - Decreased the threshold to reach the safety net
- MSOC - \$78.89 million over two years - \$81.26 per student increase (\$35.99 new plus inflation factor)
- Zero movement on transportation AND lost \$13 million/year special passengers

Governor Ferguson's Supplemental Operating Budget - The Good

In addition to making targeted increases in maintenance levels, the Governor proposed adding and/or restoring:

- \$3.5 million to Treehouse for the foster youth Graduation Success program;
- \$1.5 million for the 9th Grade Success Program (extends to 2027);
- \$1.5 million for dual language grants (extends to 2027);
- \$1.2 million for students who are homeless (extends to 2027);
- \$279,000 to OSPI for the High School & Beyond Plan implementation (*but read the small print – withholds 1.9% in MSOC 9-12th funds for licenses*)

Supp. Operating Budget – the Bad or Ugly – **Reduces** K12 non-BEA by \$94M for “savings” to General Fund

\$25.1 million by
not increasing the
LEA amount in CY
2027 by \$250

\$21.1 million by
changing the bus
depreciation
schedule to 15
years

\$19.5 million by
cutting Transition
to Kindergarten
slots by 25%

\$14 million by
reducing Running
Start FTE from 1.4
to 1.2 (means
students will have
less access to RS
credits)

Governor Ferguson's supplemental capital budget

\$2.5 million to fully fund OSPI's request for remediating lead-contaminated school drinking water

\$74.2 million to fund about half of OSPI's request for Small District Modernization Grants

- For school districts with 1,000 or fewer students
- Often used to replace HVAC systems, boilers and support more energy-efficient AC/Heat
- Also supports construction and modernization for schools without the debt capacity to access the School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP)

\$28.4 million to support additional school seismic safety grants

Pre-Filed Bills – Closing the Funding Gaps

- HB 2116 – Sets the levy equalization/Local Effort Assistance (LEA) increases into statute and raises levy and LEA rates to \$5,035 per student by CY 2032.
- HB 2147/SB 5918 – Increases MSOC by \$100/student or \$100,000, whichever is greater.
- HB 2287 – funds a special passengers safety net for students who are homeless and in the foster care system.
- SB 5858 – restores the special passengers safety net program for students who are homeless, in the foster care system, or students with disabilities.

Pre-Filed Bills – Fixing SB 5814 (2025)



HB 2101 – exempts live presentations from the retail sales and use tax.



HB 2121 – exempts non-profits and schools from certain sales and use taxes on services.



HB 2130 – repeals new taxes under ESSB 5814.



HB 2257 – Department of Revenue “technical correction” bill.



HB 2290 – exempts schools and school districts from retail and sales and use tax.



SB 5980 – exempts live presentations from retail sales and use tax.

Preparing for 2026 – where we were, where we are now

- Last session, ~\$16 billion shortfall over four years
- Closed the gaps with a series of tax increases, including tax on services and impacts are still shaking out – not a lot of appetite for tax votes in an election year – biggest is SB 5814 (tax on services)
- Lots of **uncertainty** from the federal government
 - Governor Ferguson said federal funding accounts for 28% of the state budget
 - Impact of H.R. 1 and the 2026 FFY is projected to have less funding for Medicaid and SNAP; state might have to start preparing to fill gaps (most are after the mid-term elections)
- Forecasted revenue since April enacted budget has **declined**
 - Through June 30, 2029 - \$1.3 billion less revenue over the four years
 - BUT \$3.2 billion in caseload increases (services provided by the state) and ML expenditures over 4-year period – without any policy changes in 2026 session
 - Projected \$4.3 billion deficit over four years
- **New revenue?**
 - Gov Ferguson says will veto any sales or property tax increases, but opened door to a \$1 million+ income tax
 - House and Senate Democrats are looking at a wealth tax, income tax, payroll tax on high-wage earners



WSPTA is
about the
“whole
child”

Priorities for 2026 include:

- Closing the funding gaps
- Addressing student mental health
- Preventing gun violence and youth suicide
- Supporting special education
- Expanding school construction funding options

Other themes:

- Preserve and reinvest K-12 education funding
- No new unfunded mandates or costs to school districts
- Our schools are community hubs and meet student needs for food, shelter, and access to health care through school staff and programs and community partners
- Protect our students and their families from intimidation and threats

Students Deserve:

Ample, fully funded public education

Equitable opportunities in every district

Sustainable funding that reflects actual district costs

It's the paramount duty in our State's Constitution



Maintain K-12 & Fund Public Schools

Ask: Keep K-12 education funding at current and inflation-adjusted levels. NO reductions even to non-basic education activities.

Talking Points:

- Ample funding = paramount duty of Washington state. Education funding represents about 43% of the 2025-27 budget.
- Fewer students = less state funding to districts but the operating and classroom costs remain the same.
- State investments for Maintenance, Supplies & Operating Costs (MSOC) have not kept pace with inflation. To stabilize school districts, the state must increase MSOC or make incremental adjustments over the next four years.
 - SB 5918/HB 2147 would increase by \$100 per student or \$100,000, whichever is greater.
 - Sen. Lisa Wellman, D-Mercer Island and Rep. Mia Gregerson, D-SeaTac are prime sponsors.
- SB 5858 would restore the safety net program for Special Passengers (\$13M per year) – this is a basic level of support needed for highly mobile students and districts.
- The K-12 system can't take another hit. Even small reductions in funding can erode progress on student learning and well-being.

What to Say When They Say No

We understand this is another tough budget year and a lot of competing priorities.

Funding public schools is the state's paramount duty.

This is not the time to lose ground, but to hold district funding stable and preserve K-12 funding from cuts or decreases due to circumstances outside of their control.

We understand that there are a lot of uncertainties with the federal government.

Our schools are more than classrooms – they are safe spaces, community hubs, and trusted environments where students receive meals, access health care, and obtain critical services to support success.

But school districts have been cutting back on programs for several years now.

- *Share the story of what's been going on with your district, impact on your students*
- *What doesn't get done due to unfunded MSOC (e.g., fewer intervention specialists or instructional coaches, delayed curriculum adoption impact on learning).*

WSPTA supports predictable, progressive, and sustainable revenue sources that amply fund K-12 public education.

No New Unfunded Mandates

- Since 2017, the Legislature has passed more than 100 new school year requirements or programs, required additional data collection and reporting, and created layers of sometimes conflicting or confusing policies and procedures.
- No matter how well intentioned, the Legislature must say No to adding anything new to school districts' plates, particularly if it doesn't come with direct funding and sufficient staffing for implementation.
- Already more than a dozen unfunded mandate bills and graduation requirements have been filed in 2026.
- There's an opportunity cost when new requirements are added – something in the system must give. It is time to let the system rest.

Address the Unintended Burden of SB 5814 (2025) on School Districts

Ask: Clarify or amend statute related to SB 5814 to remove the unintended tax burden applied to school district, specifically for temporary staffing services and “live” presentations.

Talking Points:

- This tax was never intended for public schools.
- School districts rely on temporary staffing contracts to support services to individual students and groups of students.
- School districts must provide training to teachers and other staff for state-required and local professional development and curriculum adoption.
- Also included in “live” presentations are activities like music concerts, theater, and more.
- Added tax costs to school districts divert funds away from students and student services, compounding district budget pressures.

How You Can Elevate WSPTA Priorities

- Identify stories and data from students, staff and district leadership.
- Keep it simple: videos, photos, quotes, one-pagers, charts.
- Coordinate with the district on visits to schools – show and tell works really well.
 - Say thank you for prior investments, share what has been helpful, what is being lost.
 - Ask for what is needed and share why.
- Meet with your legislators and follow up with emails, phone calls or virtual check-ins.
- Attend Focus Day and participate in Focus on Advocacy Week.

Legislative Action Planning

Recommendations to Prepare You for Session Advocacy



Talk with your districts, clarify their education priorities

Align with WSPTA priorities



Build and nurture relationships with your local legislators

During session, and remember that interim is the best time to build those relationships

Remember to reach out positively with Legislative Assistants



Gather and share information (data and facts – head; compelling – heart stories)



Collaborate with others

Focus Day – January 19, 2026



- **Register** now
- **Plan** your day
 - Limited parking, so carpooling is encouraged
 - Limited meal options, so purchase with WSPTA or bring food, water and snacks (discrete)
 - Dress for the weather
 - Expect crowds – it's a holiday
- **Email requests** for meetings should have been sent
 - Tell them how many people to expect will be attending the meeting
 - Legislators will reserve conference rooms or the House or Senate galleries to meet with groups
 - Most legislators have a limit of how many can be in a legislator's office
 - Talking Points, Build Your Pitch, Making Appointments, and Successful Meetings with legislators can be found on the WSPTA website, Advocacy tab, Focus on Advocacy and the Toolkit
 - Can't come to Olympia? **Schedule a virtual meeting** with your legislator. They are meeting virtually with constituents.

Focus on Advocacy Week – January 26-30

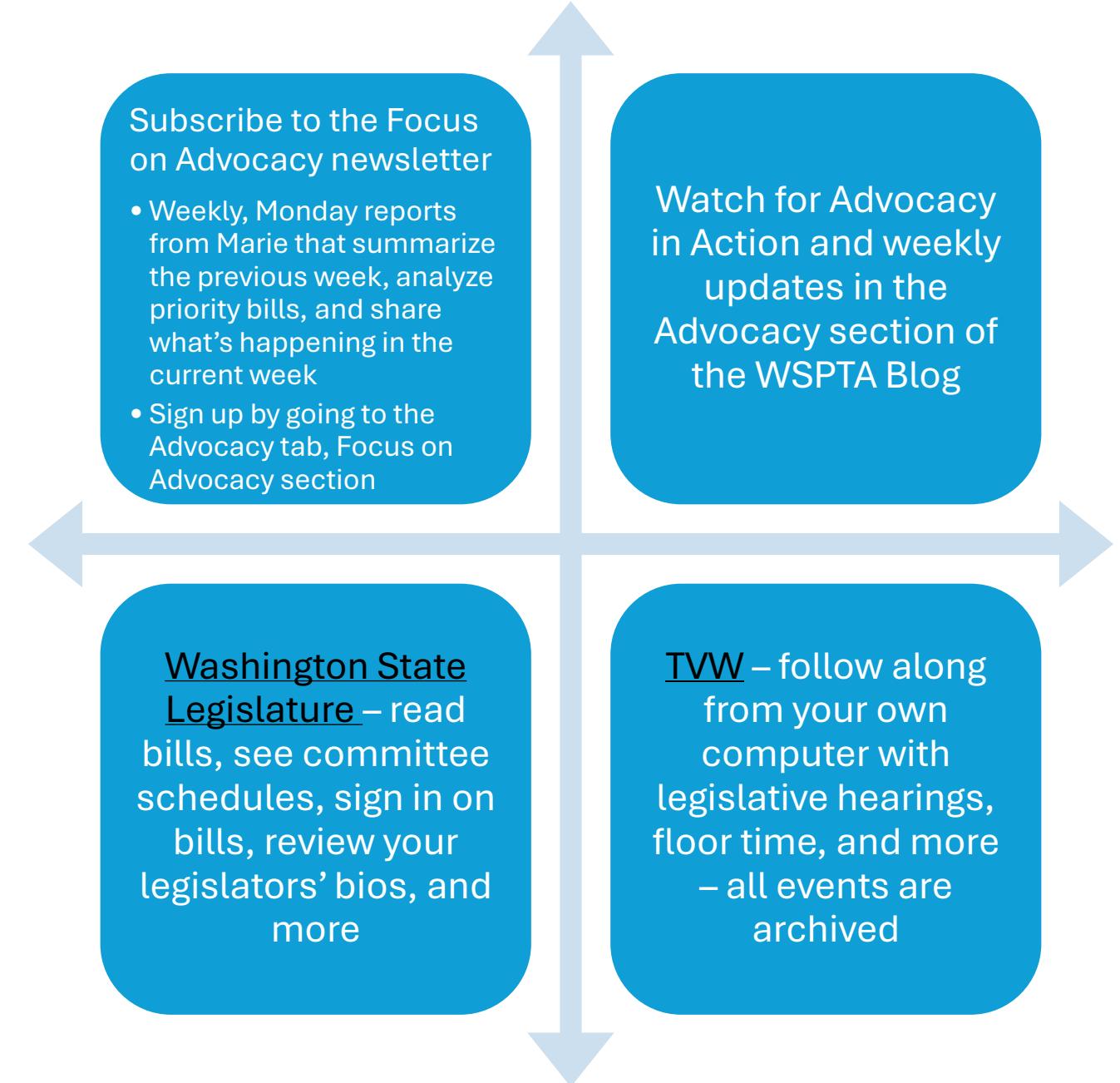
One new message a day

- Top 5
- Other supported
- Priority bills in front of the Legislature

Copy will be prepared for you, but we
need your stories too

- Each message will have content from WSPTA
and a place for you to add a personal story or
data/facts from your school or district
- Will be sent to your legislators

How to Stay Engaged – beyond Focus Day



More Ways to Connect

- Join the WSPTA Advocacy Slack and connect with your fellow advocates statewide.
- Is something happening in your school community that speaks to what we've talked about tonight? Share your story with us!
- Got questions about tonight's presentation? Email ptaadvocacydir@wastatepta.org

Share Your Story



WSPTA Advocacy Slack Sign Up Form



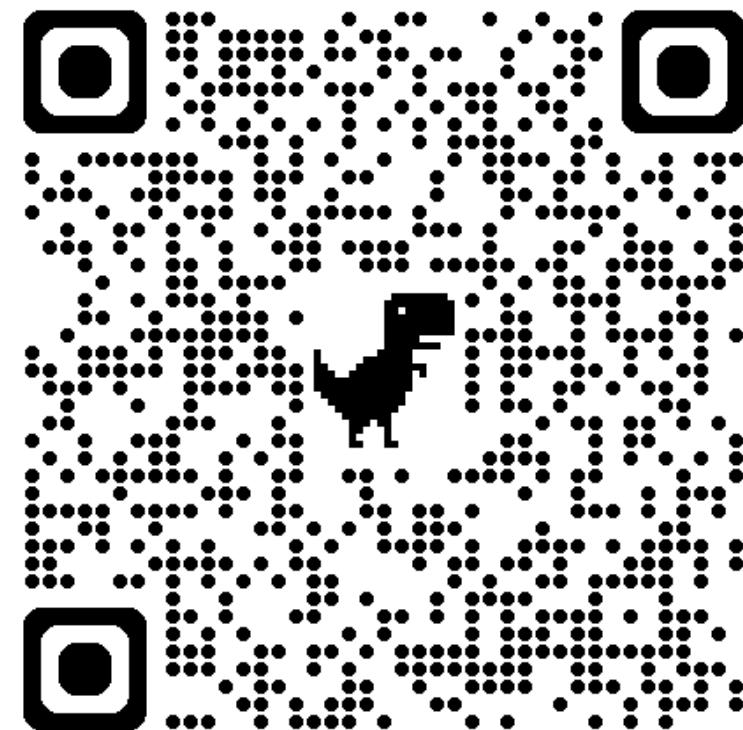
Call to Action: Protect K-12 Funding in the 2026 Legislative Session

Snap the QR code to join us in urging our legislators to:

- Avoid any cuts to school district funding and keep promises made in the 2025 session
- Reinvest K-12 funding lost to enrollment decline back into districts to stabilize our schools
- Close the MSOC (Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs) funding gap so state funding reflects actual costs and keeps pace with inflation
- Prioritize K-12 in budget decisions

Numbers matter here. Share this Alert with your networks, tell them why funding public education is important to you and encourage them to contact their legislators.

Action Alerts only take a minute or two!



Thank you for spending your evening with us.
See you at Focus Day!

Don't forget to sign up for Action Alerts! (QR Code below)

