



**Worthington
Legislative Platform
2014**

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Legislative Priorities for 2014

Worthington School District #518

District #518 has developed priorities for the 2014 legislative session. These priorities are listed as items that the District would like to see addressed in this session. Some of the items would restore local decision making that allows for a quality education to be provided to all students, while others are addressing mandates that continue to cost all districts dollars with no additional financial assistance. **Hence, reducing the dollars available for the classroom!**

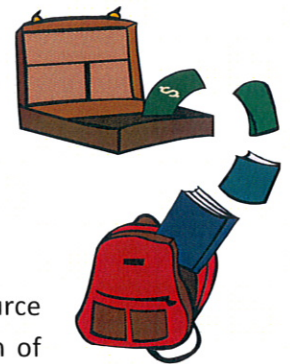
District #518's Priorities:

1. Education Funding

The Worthington School District is in support of Statute changes to establish that the level of per pupil funding be determined and approved within thirty (30) calendar days from the submission of the Governor's budget. Further, the establishment of the State percent of funding shall be the only subject of such legislation.

Rationale:

- School Districts are limited in their ability to make decisions related to resource allocations and resource management when education funding is the last action of the legislature.
- If education is the number one priority of the State, then funding should be among the first decisions made by the State Legislature.
- We support the repeal of the homestead exclusion on local property taxes and the return to the homestead credit formula.
- Support addressing the inequities related to taxable property within districts across the State.
- Support reform and efficiencies of special education regulations.
- We support the authority for levy continuation by school boards.



2. Reduction of Mandates

MSBA developed a list of over one hundred mandates that are considered unfunded or out of date or inefficient related to student academic success. Only a small number have been addressed in the past legislative session. A few mandates are listed;

- 120A.40 School Calendar – limits when a district may start the school year.
- 120A.41 Length of School Year – creates limits based on 15 year old decisions.

- Many more examples and information are available and need to be changed within the mandates as identified by MSBA.
- District should have local decision making authority.
- New legislation regarding teacher's and principal's evaluations has created another unfunded mandate that is estimated to cost school districts across the State at total of \$83 million.

3. Local Levy Authority

MSBA, MREA and other organization continue to support local levy authority for a variety of funding opportunities and District 518 supports this approach.

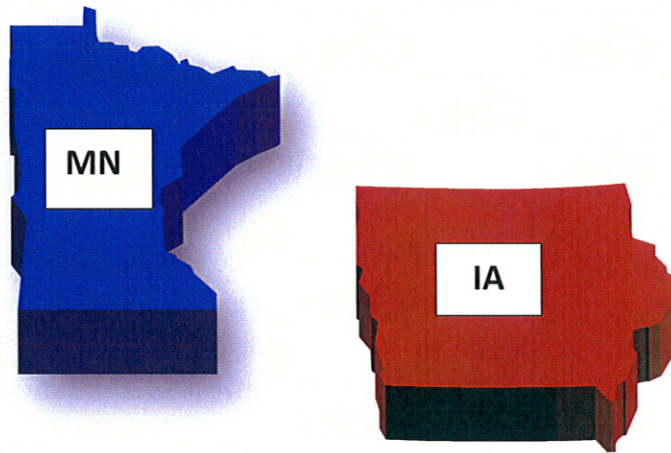
- Districts need to be given more local decision making authority in a variety of areas, but in the area of levies it is extremely important particularly due to continue fiscal concerns.
- Levy opportunities should be consistent in all parts of the state.
- Maintain a school district's right to determine when a local levy election is held.
- District 518 would promote the development of a local option sales tax opportunity for Regional Centers outside the 7 County Metro Area that must be in collaboration with other Government Entities to promote community resources (eg. Recreational facilities).



4. Reciprocity with Iowa

District #518 supports and would like addressed a sharing agreement with Iowa similar to the one established with South Dakota for border Districts to receive financial support from another state.

- No current agreement allows for basic financial support for students attending school in Minnesota from Iowa and often times is extremely difficult for districts to individually work with out of state schools.
- District supports an established basic financial support similar to the agreement established with South Dakota.
- Agreement should be negotiated with Iowa as soon as possible through the Minnesota Department of Education.



5. Eliminate Labor Day Mandate

The Worthington School District would like to have legislation passed to remove the restriction in law establishing a start time after Labor Day.

- District #518 believes that the starting day for school should be a local decision and supports removal of any restriction in this area.
- Allowing districts the flexibility in starting school could also provide the opportunity for potential energy savings and increase academic achievement.

6. Create a Certificate Program

The Worthington School District would like to address a growing concern regarding young adults that have limited credits towards graduation and may struggle due to language issues. This opportunity would address students between the ages of 17 to 20 that cannot receive a diploma either through traditional methods or a GED due to other issues like language.

- Develop a certificate option that is in collaboration with school districts and other post-secondary institutions that provides job skills in a specific area.
- Creates a positive language program and skill acquisition that supports a career ready opportunity for young adults.
- Does not count these students against the local district's graduation rate or other data that is mandated by the State.

7. Building levy equalization

- District need to have the legislature address equalization for facilities across the state in order to allow for a better taxing structure.
- Consideration of more equalization aid for district with poor property wealth.
- Districts that are not operating a High School (tuition agreement) must provide for facility usage within the tuition agreement (bond assistance or direct payment based on per pupil).

8. Integration Aid equal for All Districts

- Aid to districts need to be comparable (metro and rural)
- All funding areas need to address support for the diverse population

9. Principal/Teacher Evaluation Mandate (eliminates or fund)

- This mandate will cost District 518 \$350,000 to \$500,000 to implement.
- Legislation has been determined at the State level for local implementation in collaboration with the district and association that infringes on managerial rights.
- Created an environment not conducive to a collaborative interest for students
- No research that supports a minimal implementation.
- Potentially has made it a legal concern for elimination of a poor teacher while increasing costs.

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City of Worthington 2014 Minnesota Legislative Priorities

Lewis and Clark Bonding Request

The Lewis & Clark Joint Powers Board, representing the four Minnesota members of the Lewis & Clark Regional Water System including the cities Worthington and Luverne, Lincoln Pipestone Rural Water and Rock County Rural Water, has submitted a request for a capital appropriation in the amount of \$61,055,269 to construct the Minnesota portions of the Lewis & Clark project and allow delivery of water to the four Minnesota member entities. The request represents the amount of funding that can be obligated for construction in Minnesota from July 1, 2014, to June 30, 2016, and would result in connections to the City of Luverne, Rock County Rural Water and Lincoln Pipestone Rural Water. An estimated additional \$1,161,000 would be needed in FY16 to complete the connection to the City of Worthington.

The Lewis & Clark Regional Water System project was authorized by Congress in 2000 and was to receive 80% of construction funding from the federal government with the remaining 20% of funding to be provided by the three participating states and the twenty member entities. The three states and the twenty members have already paid 100% of their project cost share while, as of 9/30/13, the federal government still owes \$207.4 million. Since, FY09, when construction progress on the project became entirely dependent on federal funding, funding levels have dropped to levels that are not even keeping pace with project inflation while the need for additional water resources in southwest Minnesota has continued to grow.

On April 1, 2013, Governor Dayton held a conference call with Senators Klobuchar and Franken and Representative Walz to discuss how to keep construction of the Lewis & Clark project moving forward. During the call the Governor suggested the possibility of additional State funding in order to help connect the Minnesota members. Follow-up conversations with the Governor's office have confirmed his continuing support for providing additional State funding.

Biotechnology Advancement Center Bonding Request

The economic development leaders of Worthington, Minnesota have committed time, talent, and funds to develop a sustainable, low cost, high value education center that brings the dynamic industry of agriculture biosciences together with education as a true convergence.

The financial commitments from federal, state and local government have paid dividends with the occupancy of the BAC as an educational and business incubator but our work is not done. Initial state funds for the BAC had to be returned due to language restrictions and as a result the City is asking for a

reappropriation of \$398,000. The laboratory portion of the BAC will provide needed support to existing and future regional bioscience business and educational institutions as well as the adjacent Bioscience Industrial Park. This project is the result of a long-term vision that plays to Worthington's strength position of servicing the animal bioscience industry.

Housing

Housing continues to be a concern at all levels of the spectrum. Worthington has seen a steady growth in population at over 13 percent from the most recent census data. During this time of population growth there has been a stagnation of new home construction. These factors along with a strong employment need of our businesses have presented the demand for over **500** new units by 2020.

The State should partner with local housing efforts to relieve the demand for so business growth can occur. Programs for workforce housing, rehabilitation or homes, tax incentives or other programs should be funded sufficiently to help address this critical issue and remove a significant barrier to economic growth.

Completion of Highway 60 to St. James

While completion of the final section of Highway 60 to Worthington from the Iowa border officially opened on November 22, 2013 after three years of construction, the long awaited project won't be complete until the full project is complete. The investment for long term economic development won't be realized until the Minneapolis metropolitan area is linked with I-29 and I-90 corridors via Highway 60 and 169. Efforts to divert funding for completion of this project should be fought and the timeline for the completion of the project should remain on track for 2018.

Public Safety ARMER

In 2012, the City of Worthington in conjunction with Nobles County migrated to the State's ARMER system to comply with the federally mandated 2013 deadline for VHF narrowbanding and to meet the State's push for radio system interoperability.

Build-outs of the ARMER system in other areas of the state the MN Legislature authorized sales tax abatement for purchases of equipment used on the ARMER system. The Legislature approved the sales tax abatement for the original build-out in the Metro area and the build-outs in Central MN (St. Cloud area) and Southeastern MN (Rochester area). We are seeking equitable treatment on this issue and would like to see a bill similar to H.F. 394 authored by Representative Howes in 2011, which would allow for retroactive sales tax abatement on such purchases made after June 30, 2010 for the continued build-out in the SW region.

Greater Minnesota Economic Development Initiatives

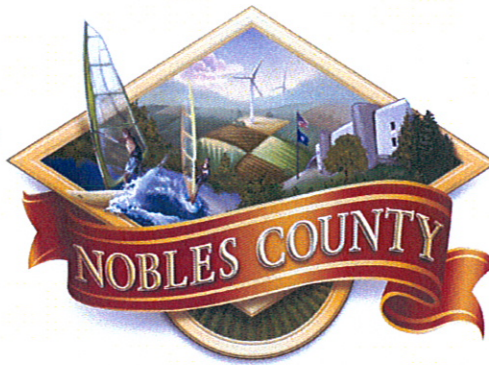
Minnesota's economy needs a pro-jobs agenda at the legislature and policies need to recognize the different challenges faced by businesses in Greater Minnesota. The Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities has proposed several initiatives that address these needs so businesses can grow and prosper in all regions of the state. These efforts have focused on a jobs creation fund, training programs, enhancements to the Angel Investment Tax Credits, Broadband development and public infrastructure support. These programs will help promote economic development and keep rural Minnesota more competitive.

Trail Development

The City is interested in increasing the recreational, transportation and quality of life opportunity to its residents. The City has identified the establishment of a trail network as an important priority for the City. The City is requesting state trail funding to help the city with this important attribute to our community and eventually network into a broader system as trail access grows across Minnesota.

This Old House

The State had promoted tempering what can be a disincentive to maintaining a City's housing stock by establishing a program referred to as "This Old House." The program allowed homeowners to defer the increase in valuation that was seen by making improvements in older homes. The tax incentive defers 100% of increased taxes for a ten years period and 20% for an additional five years. This can provide an established community like Worthington a method where homeowners will not face a financial disincentive to update older homes. The City supports the restoration of this important program.



"In cooperation with our citizens, we improve the quality of life for individuals, families and communities by fostering a healthy economy and environment."

Nobles County Legislative Platform 2014 Legislative Session

Local Government Management

Funding: Nobles County supports the principle that state program funding fully support state and federal mandates and funding for County Program Aid, Transportation infrastructure, CERTs, Public Health, Human Services, disaster relief (AMEM platform) and Community Corrections be maintained at a level at which the County is able to deliver essential services, and to simplify processes and models, develop and acquire appropriate technology to most efficiently serve the citizens.

Statutory Positions: Nobles County supports giving greater flexibility and opportunity to combine and appoint statutory positions to improve local government efficiency.

Energy Production, Investment and Conservation

Renewable Energy: Nobles County supports efforts to have the wind energy production tax eliminated from levy limits and allow investors appropriate tax incentives to continue investing in the infrastructure required.

Biofuels: Nobles County supports the state move to a 10% blend of biodiesel in all diesel fuel for the summer months starting in 2014. It improves air quality, is sustainable and keeps jobs in Minnesota.

Collaboration

Private/Public Partnerships: Nobles County supports further partnerships between counties and providers, both private and other public agencies to deliver services efficiently and effectively.

Multi-agency Services: Nobles County supports collaborative efforts across school districts, townships, cities, and multiple counties where that teamwork better supports the citizens of Minnesota.

**Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce
2014 Legislative Priorities**

Agriculture

We support agriculture. Strengthening animal agriculture from livestock, dairy and crop producers to input dealers and processors will create a strong rural economy that is interdependent with the entire state economy. The strong interrelationship between agriculture in rural Minnesota, jobs and value-added processing in rural areas must be protected and strengthened without additional costs. It is important to educate the residents and elected official across the entire state of Minnesota on the importance of agriculture.

Education

The Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce believes in the following legislative priorities:

- Supports a sharing agreement with Iowa similar to the one established with South Dakota for border School Districts to receive financial support from another State.
- Charter School oversight and accountability is needed to ensure that quality Education is being provided.
- Equivalent funding for school districts related to immigrants and minority populations.
- Equivalent and equitable taxation for rural districts and providing an equitable solution in the area of bond funding for all districts.
- Providing an avenue for students between the ages of 17 and 20 that creates a career ready option due to credit deficiency or other factors prohibiting reaching graduation requirements and supporting other needed learning skills.
- Reduction and/or elimination of unfunded mandates such as starting date, evaluation requirements, special education requirements above the federal level and so on.

Funding for Older Adult Services

Minnesota is growing older. By the year 2020, Minnesota will have more seniors than school children. Investments are needed to reform the system for the future.

Those who care for older adults are not paid adequate wages, compared to wages paid for the same work in hospitals and other medical professions. Many health care workers caring for older adults doesn't have adequate health insurance. Quality care for seniors

depends on quality caregivers.

We encourage you to support the 5% increase for nursing homes and a 5% increase for Waivered Services (Home & Community Base Services). We are asking you to invest in older adults; invest in waivers and invest in caregivers.

Minnesota's seniors helped build Minnesota. Minnesota's seniors deserves quality care and options for care so that they can have the right care at the right time in their own communities.

Healthcare

Allow easier access for individuals to obtain health insurance assistance from local insurance agents.

Housing

The Chamber of Commerce supports development of programs for all levels of housing options.

Immigration

Immigrants impact the Worthington community by contributing positively to the economy and participating in efforts to keep Worthington a strong community. Immigration is a federal issue and should be addressed at the federal level. We support reform starting at the national level and working to the state level. Otherwise it will create a patchwork of immigration laws.

- Reform should include a timely and affordable way for current immigrants and their families regardless of status, to become documented legal participants in our society. We support a path to permanent residency for all immigrants residing in the United States who are not otherwise excluded for reasons such as criminal convictions.
- Reform should include a simple and accurate status verification that is affordable and accessible especially for businesses. Reforms should protect those meeting their obligations from liability.
- Reform should include a simple and timely approach to the future flow of Immigrants, including permanent and temporary status.

Lewis and Clark Bonding Request

The Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce supports the Cities Priority on the Lewis and Clark Bonding Request.

Local Government Aid

The Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce appreciates the connection to property taxes that local government plays in financing city and county services. Therefore, we support maintaining the state funding for Local Government Aid at its current level and should the state face a deficit, any further cuts or unallotment to Local Government Aid should not be under consideration.

State Building Code Issues

The State's approach to administration of the State Building Code is problematic. Its Uneven application statewide creates an uneven playing field for larger cities that have the code by mandate. In small cities the code is optional. In unincorporated areas in the townships the codes are usually not enforced by the counties. This discourages local contractors who may think that the city is unfair because it can be done in other communities.

Transportation

Provide adequate long-term, sustainable funding streams that provide the necessary resources for all safe highway and road systems that can efficiently move people and goods throughout the state.

Trunk Highway 60

The Worthington Area Chamber of Commerce encourages the completion of the final section of Highway 60 from Windom to Butterfield should remain in the schedule for 2018. We would like to thank you for the constant work and support throughout the years in getting this project completed.