



League of Women Voters of Idaho

September 27, 2016

To: Idaho State Legislature, Members of Interim Committee on Public School Funding Formula

From: The League of Women Voters of Idaho
President, Judy Edwards

The League of Women Voters believes that all children should have an equal educational opportunity in the “general, uniform, and thorough system of public free common schools,” required by Article IX of the Idaho Constitution.”

To set a realistic goal for levels of state support for public schools, the League believes that a meaningful “state average cost per pupil” should be computed taking into consideration such factors as the average teacher’s salary in the Rocky Mountain states.

The League believes that the state has not lived up to its constitutional duty to fund public schools.

While the legislature has been granting income tax cuts and increasing sales tax exemptions, the local school districts have had to ask for supplemental property tax levies to operate their schools.

In FY 2007, 59 school districts had supplemental levies totaling \$79 million.

In FY 2016, 98 school districts had supplemental levies totaling \$186.6 million.

These supplemental levies are not equalized as the Maintenance and Operation levies were that were paid before 2006. School districts with lower property values per child now have to charge a higher tax rate in order to raise the same amount of money that districts with higher property values can raise with a lower levy.

We encourage the state to meet its obligation to provide proper funding to public schools to improve the opportunities for our children to meet the challenges of the new world of employment.

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership in the League is open to men and women of all ages. With 95 years of experience and 850 local and state affiliates, the League is one of America’s most trusted grassroots organizations.