

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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National Council of Jewish Women

INADEQUATE FUNDING SENTENCES ILLINOIS STUDENTS TO UNCERTAIN FUTURE

The National Council of Jewish Women and the League of Women Voters bring together taxpayers, government officials, lobbyists and educators to solve the education crisis

May 1, 2006, WILMETTE, IL – If there's one thing that everyone can agree on, it's that education is a top priority. And yet, Illinois seems to be the poster child for a system that is failing our students. At the request of the National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW) and the League of Women Voters (LWV) of Evanston, Glencoe, Highland Park, Lake Forest/Lake Bluff, Wilmette, and Winnetka-Northfield-Kenilworth, representatives from the Cook county Tax Assessor's office, A+ Illinois, and Ed-Red met April 25, 2006 at the North Shore Senior Center to discuss Illinois' increasing achievement, funding and spending gaps.

Illinois is ranked 49th in its support for public education. Insufficient funding is everywhere. Grayslake has shortened its school day due to inadequate funds. Sparta students learn from 20-year-old textbooks. Even north suburban parents complain about class size. The Illinois Education Funding Advisory Board, a panel appointed by the governor, determined that \$6,405 per child per year is the minimum amount to achieve specific learning goals. The current state Foundation Level is \$5,200. But in Illinois, the quality of education children receive really does depend on where you live. Bindu Batchu, Campaign Manager, A+ Illinois, pointed out that some school districts spend over \$20,000 per student while others struggle to raise \$5,000.

The funding gap is not the sole issue schools face today. When homeowners and businesses receive property tax refunds, those dollars are taken directly out of the school districts general revenue funds. While taxpayers have every right to their refunds, Erika Lindley, Executive Director of Ed-Red pointed out that the legislature needs to find some way to ease the burden on the schools. Ms. Lindley also discussed the issues most schools face with increased costs for special education mandates.

The education forum was organized by Stephanie Victor, NCJW Vice President of Public Policy, who emphasized that "the Governor and Illinois legislators need to pass an income tax increase and waive property tax caps. Relying on property taxes has not fixed the problem for 30 years. NCJW and the League of Women Voters are going to make a strong effort in the coming year to let our legislators know that maintaining the status quo makes our students suffer."

The panelists agree that the current system of funding public education is out of balance. We need to ensure that all children receive a quality education by establishing adequate, reliable, sustainable funding. When citizens complain about high taxes, the legislature responds, and the children suffer. Still, two-thirds of people surveyed by A+ Illinois supported a state income tax increase provided that the additional funds would be earmarked for education and that the tax package would include property tax relief.

The Illinois Constitution provides that “A fundamental goal of the People of the State is the educational development of all persons to the limits of their capacities.... The state has the primary responsibility for financing the system of public education.” Illinois needs to work harder to reach that goal.



Kathy Nesburg, LWV, Bindu Batchu, A+ Illinois, Stephanie Victor, NCJW, Erika Lindley, Ed-Red, Ed Noonan, Cook County Tax Assessor's Office

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NCJW is a volunteer organization, inspired by Jewish values, that works to improve the quality of life for women, children, and families and to ensure individual rights and freedoms for all through its network of 90,000 members, supporters, and volunteers nationwide. The NCJW's Chicago North Shore Section, www.ncjwcns.org, offers public affairs, community service and education programming. For more information, call (847) 853-8889.

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