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[00:00:28] **Speaker 1** Hey, good afternoon. Thank you very much for being here today as assembly Republicans talk about some of the proposals they'll be bringing up and announcing for the fall. Assembly Republicans have had a long tenure of leading in the Capitol on issues that are important to the state. We really had a good summer. I hope most of you enjoyed your summer break. For those of us in elected office, we got to go and spend a lot of time with our constituents. We heard a ton of positive feedback about the budget that we passed, focusing on making sure more money is in the pockets of Wisconsinites, ensuring that we have the resources for the priorities of the state in child care and education, and also doing it in a way that actually got it signed into law. Our hope is that we have a good agenda you're going to hear about today that will also have the same kind of track record, working together trying to find consensus and hopefully having those bills move forward between the spring and the fall session. So with that I'm going to start by calling who's going to talk about our series of bills and then we'll have the authors first talk about our education ideas. And then we'll talk about some speaker task forces that are going to be announced later today too. Hope you have a good day.

[00:01:33] **Speaker 2** Well, thank you. You know, we'll talk a little bit about our education agenda. Um, and Wisconsin, first of all, still continues to have very good public schools that the most recent U. S News and World Report survey ranked us as sixth best in the country. But there's still a lot of room to improve. And our our gap achievement gap between black and white students in Wisconsin is the worst in the country. The most recent 2024 NAEP scores show that 78 percent of students are below proficient in math, 65 percent are below efficient in reading, and nearly 45 percent of high school seniors are below basic in math which is the highest rate since this current test was first implemented. Last session, we passed Act 20 to address our reading crisis, and even though Governor Evers' illegal use of the partial line item veto delayed implementation fully and delayed the funding, we're still getting great reports back from the field on the success of Act 20. And we'd like to use a similar approach in addressing our math deficiencies. A bill will be introduced soon that will follow the approach of Act 20 in using screeners to catch struggling students early and put them on an individualized plan to catch them back up like we did in Act 20. This bill is not going to be the full solution to the problem, but I think it's a very good first step in addressing a very serious problem. In this last budget, we significantly increased the budget for the Office of School Safety and added 13 new permanent positions. In building on that, we've had some complaints around the state of drones flying over schools, so I'll be introducing a bill very soon that will make it illegal to fly a drone over a school. Without the consent written consent of the administrators. This is both a safety and a privacy issue Finally we have some very disturbing demographics trends in Wisconsin that are going to going to need to be looking at in the future While Wisconsin is the only Midwestern state that is not seeing declining population overall We are seeing a very rapid decline in our student population It's dropping by at a rate of 1% per year for the foreseeable future. And just since 2013-2014 school year we've seen a decline of 53,000 students. And this decline is attributed mostly to declining fertility rates. The decline is especially severe in rural areas and right now 70% of the districts statewide are seeing a decline in population. So right now we have 421 districts across the state. If we're going to continue to provide opportunities for students and a great quality education, that number is going to have to drop and if we're gonna be able to continue to afford to provide those opportunities. So right now we will be introducing a package of bills very soon and I'm going to introduce Representative Ned Weske to go into further detail on that.

[00:04:36] **Speaker 3** Thank you representative kitchens. Good afternoon everyone. I'm going to talk to you a little bit about school consolidation and shared services. So as representative kitchens mentioned, many schools across the state are being impacted by declining enrollment. And like he said, we have lost 53,000 students over the last decade because student enrollment is the primary driver of our state school funding formula. Districts experiencing declining enrollment receive less money in state aid. So to make up for this many districts go to referendum and they raise local property tax bills to pay for increasingly empty buildings. The already heavy burden on taxpayers will only get worse over time thanks to the governor's 400-year veto that will bring us a four-century Democrat property tax increase. So the status quo is not sustainable, and that's why we've been taking input from school administrators both urban and rural educators and DPI on legislation that would provide financial incentives to school districts to voluntarily consolidate or share services in areas where The circumstances might be ripe to gain efficiencies and reduce wasteful spending. Our partners in public education have been sharing their interest in consolidation and they have also been sharing what they perceive to be obstacles to combining. So our legislation will potentially address concerns regarding the reorganization process for school districts, the cost to determine feasibility of consolidation, and how to address the local tax impact when two or more districts join into one and they may Thank you very much. Significantly different mill rates. So that's just a few of the things we've been discussing that are on the horizon with this bill package. By providing school districts with some additional tools to consolidate or share services, districts won't just realize the financial benefit but they will also unlock opportunities. To benefit students academically. So the Consolidated School District has more opportunities to offer more students. The savings that they realize, particularly from reducing administrative bloat and redundant services, will provide districts with more resources for the classroom, whether it's increasing teacher pay, expanding access to AP courses or tech ed courses, or increasing special education services. Those are all things we've been hearing from our administrators around the state. Consolidation has long term positive effects on both students and taxpayers. So we need to stop the cycle of never ending referendums. Now, Democrats might argue that the solution is simply to throw more money at the problem, but it does not solve the issue that there are just less kids being born today than there were 20 years ago. It's a birth rate issue. Enrollment continues to decline especially in smaller rural districts many schools will face difficult decisions and our goal is to provide support and give tools remove barriers and create incentives for voluntary consolidation so that schools can find efficiencies and communities can stop the cycle of referendums. As an example, in my district, in Kenosha County and a little bit of Walworth County, I have seven single school K-8 school districts and two single school districts that are high schools. That's a lot of administrative costs and a lot redundant services and... Money being spent that could be going to teachers and into the classroom. So many of them have gone to referendum over the last couple of years. Some have been successful, some have failed, but we're seeing a failure rate increase. And consolidation cases like these could lower overhead, reduce costs, and allow schools to serve students more efficiently and more effectively. This package will be about helping schools adapt to changing realities while protecting taxpayers and ensuring that Wisconsin students continue to receive a high quality education. And with that, I'm going to turn things over to Representative Rodriguez for an exciting talk on federal tax credits.

[00:08:48] **Speaker 4** Good afternoon, thank you, Representative Nidwesky. Recently, the federal government created the National School of Choice Tax Credit, which allows donors to receive a dollar-for-dollar tax credit on any donations that they make to non-profits that provide student scholarships. In order to participate, the state needs to opt in. And so my proposal would require that the governor and his administration would notify the federal government that Wisconsin will participate in the federal tax credit program. This will allow donors to support Wisconsin students while receiving a federal benefit. Without opt-in-in, Wisconsin's donors' contributions could go to students who are educated outside of our state. By opt- in-in we ensure that these dollars stay here and directly benefit our Wisconsin kids. This program isn't about one educational school. Instead, it helps public, private, charter, and even homeschool families access the tools they need to help their kids succeed. These scholarships can be used for things like tutoring, transportation costs, or for supplemental courses that directly support children in the classroom. This opportunity comes at no cost to Wisconsin taxpayers. This is completely voluntary and it is entirely funded by private donations and it does not touch our state budget. So this is something that would be really good for all of our children in our state. Up next is Representative Murphy who will talk about dual enrollment. Thank you.

[00:10:44] **Speaker 5** Good afternoon. As the chairman of the Committee on Colleges and Universities, I spent the past spring and summer diving deep into dual enrollment. These programs let our high school students earn credits before they even graduate from high school. I've heard from parents across Wisconsin about how tough it can be for their kids to get into UW-Madison. Let me tell you. Students with dual enrollment credits have a real edge. But here's the thing. Wisconsin's dual enrollment system is complex, it lacks clear direction, and has regulations that sometimes hold us back. I've met with K-12 schools, DPI, parents, students, and leaders from the technical colleges. Thank you. Wisconsin's independent colleges, and the UW system, and we all agree. That there's work that we need to do on this and we are collaborating to fix it. So how can we do this? Number one, we can expand access for all students. We need to make dual enrollment available to more kids, especially those in rural communities here in Wisconsin. And many principals and administrators, superintendents from rural schools have you know voiced their concern for being able to provide the appropriate opportunity for their students for dual.