



# School Nutrition Association of Wisconsin

## *State Government Affairs Report (Spring 2016)*

### **One step ahead: SNA-WI already working on legislative goals for 2017**

The Wisconsin Legislature has adjourned for the year, but the 2015-16 legislative session was an extremely busy one – both for lawmakers and SNA-WI.

Over 1,700 bills were introduced during the two-year session. However, only about 20% were signed into law. One of those bills (Assembly Bill 37) was the School Food Safety bill championed by SNA-WI.

Passage of the bill, which strengthens food safety training programs for school nutrition programs across the state, was only one of a handful of issues tackled by SNA-WI during the legislative session.

The Association also engaged lawmakers on school breakfast funding and the need to increase the state reimbursement rate. Unfortunately, due to state budget constraints and the current political environment, the Legislature did not provide additional funding, choosing instead to keep funding flat for the next two years.

But as the old adage goes, “If at first you don’t succeed, try, try again.” So while the 2015-16 legislative session just ended, SNA-WI is already setting its sights on 2017.

In fact, SNA-WI members who participated in the organization’s legislative advocacy day at the State Capitol in March were able to brief their legislators on the Association’s priorities for next year:

- Increase state funding for the school breakfast program by roughly \$1.7 million over the two-year (2017-19) state budget cycle. This would increase the state reimbursement from 7.5-cents to 10-cents per breakfast served.
- Legislation that would require the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) to modify its nutrition education standards to

include instruction on the nutritive value of foods, as outlined in the Dietary Guidelines for Americans, and knowledge of the role of a nutritious diet in promoting health, preventing chronic disease, and maintaining a healthy weight. The bill would also require the inclusion of a nutrition education component as part of health class. Current law requires students to complete at least a half credit of health education to graduate from high school.

In addition to educating state legislators on our legislative priorities, SNA-WI also recently met with leadership at DPI to brief them on our agenda and further strengthen our working relationship with the state agency.

The SNA-WI Government Affairs Team also took the opportunity to present DPI with a suggestion to consider the inclusion of a school nutrition indicator in the department’s school report card grading system.

As part of the state’s school accountability system, DPI issues report cards for every school district in Wisconsin, grading them on student achievement and growth, test scores, college and career readiness, and other data.

Given the strong link between nutrition and the academic performance of students, SNA-WI believes any school accountability grading system would be incomplete without evaluating a district’s nutrition programs.

It was an introductory discussion with the sole purpose of laying the groundwork for potential consideration of the issue in the future. No details were discussed, and SNA-WI will certainly consult with members before any decisions are made to pursue the matter further.

## **Take Your Legislator to Work Program**

SNA-WI's *Take Your Legislator to Work* program is designed to help members educate their state legislators on the importance of school nutrition programs and show them firsthand how they benefit students and help them develop their full potential.

Under the program, SNA-WI members invite their legislators to their work sites to observe their school breakfast or lunch operations. The goal is to build and strengthen relationships with lawmakers and ultimately increase SNA-WI's influence in the State Capitol.

The program has been extremely successful since its launch in 2014, but continued member participation is necessary to sustain its success. If you are interested in hosting your legislators for a tour of your facilities, please contact the SNA-WI office or SNA-WI government affairs consultant, Michael Welsh at [mike@hovenconsulting.com](mailto:mike@hovenconsulting.com).