



March 8, 2016

## UEN Comments on Water Quality Initiative

The Urban Education Network includes 17 of Iowa's largest school districts which educate nearly 40% of Iowa's students.

The UEN legislative priorities, for 2016 and several years prior, have included the need to extend the State Penny for School Infrastructure and Property Tax Relief. There has been even more talk about this need since the Governor's plan was introduced, which extended the penny through 2050, but also diverted a significant portion of the state penny revenue to water quality. Although the UEN does not typically champion environmental needs within our mission of quality education for all students, this year, we find ourselves looking for options that do not compete with school resources.

The UEN leaders are grateful to those in the legislature, Reps. Anderson and Isenhardt, looking for solutions to both critical needs before us. Of course clean water is important to Iowa's future. So is the continued investment in school facilities designed for learning. The sales tax has empowered our schools to achieve savings through energy efficiency while we expand student access to technology. We have school districts within the UEN that struggle every year to keep up with growing enrollments. Some of our urban centers still have a significant backlog of infrastructure need without the property tax base to support the bonds for long term construction needs. Iowa school and technology facility needs have not yet been met. The sales tax has been and should continue to be the preferred alternative to property tax for school infrastructure needs. Voters in 99 counties approved the local option tax for schools, and continue to approve revenue purpose statements, demonstrating that preference.

The UEN encourages the Legislature and Governor to find resources necessary to sustain Iowa's environment without diverting resources from schools. We believe the alternative presented today should be given every consideration.

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