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Statement of Governor Jim Doyle Regarding Passage of the Legislative Budget Today

The budget I introduced on February 18 was honestly balanced, cut state overhead by nearly a billion dollars, did not raise taxes and protected our most important priorities – education, health care, and basic local services.

Despite predictions by some that it could not be done, my budget was balanced through responsible spending cuts and made no tax increases of any kind. I proposed no sales tax increase, no income tax increase, no corporate tax increase, and no cigarette tax increase.

I am pleased that the budget passed today includes no tax increases, consistent with my campaign pledge. At a time when Republican and Democratic Governors around the country are considering or have passed tax increases, we have held the line here in Wisconsin.

Unfortunately however, in the past four months the Legislature has fallen back on the same bad habits that got us into a \$3.2 billion deficit. They increased state spending by a hundred million dollars above my budget, relied on inflated estimates of federal revenue and added hundreds of state jobs back to the public payroll. Even as they went on their late night spending binges, they continued the time honored Madison practice of pointing the finger at local officials instead of behaving responsibly themselves.

Not only is their budget fiscally irresponsible, but it sets all the wrong priorities. They made seniors pay more for prescription drugs, while allowing drug companies to increase their profits. They abandoned decades of bipartisan support for our model Stewardship program, endangering conservation efforts and hurting our tourism industry. Worst of all is what their budget does to education – cutting our public schools by \$400 million and devastating 4-year old kindergarten. It is a budget balanced on the backs of our kids and at the expense of our future.

It is especially troubling that the Legislature did not take the opportunity to remove the multi-million dollar pork spending package that was added in the middle of the night to buy a single vote. This is exactly the kind of behavior that got us into a \$3.2 billion deficit.

I was elected to bring fiscal responsibility back to state government, and I will use my full executive authority to do just that. In the coming weeks, I will look at this budget closely to determine if I can use my line item veto powers to significantly recraft this budget. While I am hopeful that I will not have to veto the entire budget, there is a tremendous amount of work to be done to make it fiscally responsible and to protect education, health care, our environment, and the basic local services that our citizens depend on.