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Contact: Dale J. Knapp or Todd A. Berry  
(608) 255-4581 or [wistax@wistax.org](mailto:wistax@wistax.org)**NUMBER OF DISABLED YOUTH RISING****WISTAX Says State's Increase Among Highest in Nation**

MADISON—The percentage of Wisconsin's youth, ages 6 to 21, identified as disabled more than doubled between 1976-77 and 1999-2000 from 3.5% to 8.5%. This compares to an increase from 5.2% to 9.1% nationwide. According to a new report from the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance (WISTAX), a nonprofit government-research organization, Wisconsin, with a 141.8% increase, was sixth in the nation. It was exceeded only by Vermont (295.6%), New Mexico (193.1%), New Hampshire (182.4%), Rhode Island (146.1%) and Montana (143.2%).

Using U.S. Department of Education data from 1976-77 to 1999-2000, WISTAX researchers found that the number of youth identified as disabled increased 114.3% over the time frame, compared to 71.2% nationwide. However, the state remains below average in the percentage of disabled youth. Changes in these numbers can be affected by state-specific definitions of each type of disability, WISTAX noted.

In addition to the 23-year changes, the report also looked at recent trends. Between 1987-88 and 1993-94, the number of disabled youth nationwide grew at a 2.5% annual rate, compared to 4.4% in Wisconsin. In the ensuing five years, the national rate was 3.0% per year, compared to Wisconsin's 3.4%.

WISTAX researchers found that "specific learning disability" is the most common disabling condition in the state and the nation. It accounts for more than 47% of the state's disabled youth. Between 1987-88 and 1999-2000, the number of youth with a specific learning disability rose 121.8% in the state, compared to 47.0% nationally.

In 1999-2000, "other health impairment," which includes attention deficit disorder, accounted for 4.5% of the state's disabled youth. In 1987-88, it was 0.3%. Nationally, the number of youth in this category has risen 450.6% since 1987-88. The Wisconsin increase was 2,754.2%.

For a free copy of the study, "Increase in Disabled Youth 6th in Nation," write the Wisconsin Taxpayers Alliance, 335 W. Wilson St., Madison, WI 53703-3694, e-mail [wistax@wistax.org](mailto:wistax@wistax.org) or visit [www.wistax.org](http://www.wistax.org). □