

SIGNATURES NEEDED

The purpose of this edition of my bi-weekly column is to educate my readers on what has been termed the “Proposed Constitutional Amendment.” In doing so, I pledge to do my best to keep the explanation of this in layman’s terms so as to make this more understandable for more people. Perhaps, the best and simplest way to accomplish this is through a series of questions and answers.

Q. What is the Proposed Constitutional Amendment?

A. It is a prescribed fix for the problems of school funding in the State of Ohio. It stresses the fundamental right for all of Ohio’s public school children to receive a high quality education. Presently, the system of funding schools in Ohio is much like a six cylinder engine that isn’t firing on all cylinders.

Q. Why do we need a Proposed Constitutional Amendment?

A. To address the shortfalls in funding of the day-to-day operations of school districts across Ohio. It would also eliminate unfunded or partially-funded state mandates that often originate in the legislature that often dump the responsibility for funding of these mandates back on the local school districts and their taxpayers.

Q. If approved, will the Proposed Constitutional Amendment increase my property taxes?

A. No, at least not for general fund operations of the school district. Certainly, if voters were to approve any future bond levies, these would increase the property taxes. One goal of the organizers of the Proposed Constitutional Amendment is to

lower property taxes for schools across all districts in Ohio to the 20 mill floor. It also provides for property tax relief for seniors and those permanently disabled.

Q. Who is behind the Proposed Constitutional Amendment? Who is supporting it?

A. The Amendment is a collaborative effort of the various stakeholders involved with public education in Ohio. It has the support of ten major organizations associated with education in Ohio. Those organizations are: Alliance for Adequate School Funding, Buckeye Association of School Administrators, Coalition of Rural & Appalachian Schools, Ohio Fair Schools Campaign, Ohio Association of School Business Officials, Ohio Association of Public School Employees, Ohio Coalition for Equity & Adequacy of School Funding, Ohio Education Association, Ohio Educational Service Center Association, Ohio Federation of Teachers, Ohio Parent-Teacher Association, Ohio School Boards Association. Their collective effort to get the Proposed Constitutional Amendment on the November ballot is being called the “*Getting It Right for Ohio’s Future*” campaign.

Q. Why the push for the Proposed Constitutional Amendment for education in Ohio at this time?

A. It has been more than fifty years since the last Constitutional Amendment for Public Education in Ohio was approved. Much has changed since that time. The cost of doing business continues to spiral upward. More and more school districts are having to ask their voters to approve higher taxes in order to pay for the day-to-day operations of school districts. The courts in Ohio have repeatedly declared the present system of school funding to be unconstitutional. The lack of a real

effort to permanently address this problem has resulted in the formation of the Proposed Constitutional Amendment to fix the school funding problem once and for all.

Q. If the emphasis for funding the Proposed Constitutional Amendment is going to be away from property taxes, then where will the money come from to support this amendment?

A. Obviously, if the writers of the Amendment are stating that property taxes will be lowered to the 20 mill floor, the funds to support this will have to come from other sources. Though I have not heard anything mentioned specifically, it would be up to the legislature to determine how this would be done. A couple of possibilities could be a sales tax or an income tax. Again, the legislature would be responsible for determining how to pay for school funding under the Proposed Constitutional Amendment. By the way, the Adams County/Ohio Valley School District is already at the 20 mill floor for school taxing purposes.

Q. What can I do as one voter?

A. Learn all that you can on the Proposed Constitutional Amendment. Determine for yourself if you feel that our schools in Ohio are adequately funded by the state, as required by law. If possible, sign a petition to place the Amendment on the November ballot. Signing a petition doesn't mean that you agree or disagree with the writers of this Amendment. It simply means that you feel that all Ohio registered voters should have an opportunity to help make this important decision.

On a personal note, the issue of ever higher stakes in public education, coupled with unfunded or partially-funded mandates, makes it very difficult to make ends meet. Every time another unfunded mandate is passed on to school districts, something else has to be cut to pay for it. According to the language of the Proposed Constitutional Amendment, unfunded mandates would cease to become a problem. The lack of a year-to-year cost of living or inflationary funding would no longer be an issue. Like any other issue, there are pros and cons which have to be weighed by the voting public as a whole. I certainly do not pretend to tell anyone how he or she should reflect upon and vote on this issue. You have to make that determination. I am simply encouraging you to sign one of the petitions so that this issue can be brought to the voters in November, 2007. Beyond that, ask questions, go on-line, or read every article you can find on this subject. Then, you make the determination as to whether the Proposed Constitutional Amendment makes sense for Ohio.

Perhaps, you would be interested in circulating a petition yourself. If so, please get in touch with me at 544-5586. Thank you.

NO CHARGING AFTER APRIL 20TH

As we begin to wind down on another school year, it is time to remind our students and parents that charging breakfast or lunch will cease as of April 20th. After this date, no charging will be permitted. Those owing for any breakfast or lunch charges are asked to take care of these fees prior to May 25th. If you have any questions, please talk to your

building cashier or principal, or contact Kryss Hess, Child Nutrition Supervisor, at 544-5586.

PROM DATES SET

Prom dates have been established for all three high schools in the Adams County/Ohio Valley School District. They are as follows:

- North Adams High School – April 28th on a riverboat.
- Peebles High School – April 28th at the Eastgate Holiday Inn.
- West Union High School – May 12th at West Union High School.

If you need information about a Prom or about the after-Prom activities, I would suggest that you contact the building principal. As these events approach us, I would encourage all involved to remember two very strict laws. First, all passengers in a car are to use seat belts. Second, underage drinking or driving under the influence of alcohol or drugs is illegal. Third, all involved should keep in mind the new laws surrounding teenage driving. Hopefully, everyone will enjoy a wonderful and safe experience at their Prom and after-Prom party.

Finally, I would also use this opportunity to remind all parents who plan to host any Prom or graduation parties that it is illegal for you to permit alcohol consumption by anyone under the age of 21. Parents, know where your children are, who they are with, and where they are going. Let's make sure that this spring season will be a safe one for our youth.

Charles P. Kimble

Superintendent