



AT ISSUE

District Budget Impacts You

April, 2010

MTI members, knowing that decisions which will be made by School Board members will significantly impact both their personal life and their work life, turned out in large numbers at the March 22 board hearing; many making passionate statements.

While the Board need only make \$1.2 million in additional cuts, some Board members appear to fear those few who holler the loudest that they need to cut millions more. Or, some Board members feel that they should do so simply to pacify those who complain about taxes. Because of increased costs, the **Board needs to increase the Budget \$12.8 million just to provide the same services** as are available to students under the current budget. State-imposed revenue controls, however, restricts the District to \$11.6 million in additional revenue, leaving the \$1.2 million which must be cut.

In 1993, then *Governor Thompson proposed one-year revenue controls on school district spending. A year later, the Legislature made the revenue controls permanent, usurping the authority of school boards across Wisconsin from providing the quality of education desired by the local populace.* Since the implementation of the **revenue controls, the quality of education available to Wisconsin's children has suffered. Courses have been cut - especially for the talented and gifted; special education has gone from highly specialized classes to cross-categorical; services by psychologists, social workers, occupational and physical therapists and others with similar expertise have been cut and heaped on teachers and others to perform; and building maintenance is lax and District property left in disrepair.**

In short, *kids are being deprived because people complain about taxes and elected officials fear these people more than they are willing to stand up for kids. It is this kind of person who supported Proposition 13 in California and, because of a lack of financial support, drove California's educational system from the best in the United States to the worst.* And, *it is this kind of person that Governor Doyle and Legislators feared, so as not to repair or replace Wisconsin's school finance laws, when for the first time in many years, Democrats held both houses of the Legislature and the Governor's Office.* In its March 17 issue, *The Capital Times'* article "*Doyle dropped ball on school funding reform*", the *Times* wrote, "*All Doyle even did was talk about school funding reform. He*

never made any real effort." The *Times* added that when Assembly Education Committee Chair Sony Pope-Roberts met with Doyle's aides to get the ball rolling, she could not even get a followup meeting with the Governor or his aides.

The complainers about school taxes have been the same ones who have complained for years. *One of the two who complained about taxes at the March 22 meeting was Don Severson.* His home, at 534 S. Midvale Blvd., had an **assessed valuation of \$106,000 in 1994**, the first year of taxation after enactment of the revenue controls, and his **taxes for schools were \$2,067.** *Yet in 2008, given the revenue controls, Severson's home had an assessed valuation of \$210,500 and his taxes for schools were \$1,749. That figure is correct. After 14 years, while costs on everything had appreciated, Severson's taxes on his home, which had an assessed valuation of \$104,500 higher in 2008 than it did in 1994, actually paid \$318 LESS in taxes. Severson has long been a complainer about taxes for education, **yet he has not appeared before city, county, MATC or even the Legislature to complain about their taxes which have risen many times since 1994.** Yet, his taxes for Madison's schools are \$318 LESS than they were in 1994. Maybe he just doesn't want today's kids to have the education he did. There is no question that *Wisconsin's school funding system is broken, and there is no question that it is cheating Wisconsin's kids.**

People like Severson, Doyle and Legislators who refuse to correct the funding system are who Leopold teacher Kathryn Burns had in mind at the March 22 hearing when she told School Board members that she had come to Madison from California because of the latter's failure to adequately fund their schools, that California's Proposition 13 (revenue controls) had caused the deterioration of California's schools, and that the Madison Board of Education has the ability to correct this before Madison's schools fall further to the level of those in California. Burns said of Legislators that they are "more concerned about hanging onto their seat, than doing what is correct!"

Rather than fixing the broken State school finance system, the Legislature cut state aid to Madison an additional \$9.2 million for the 2009-10 school year and another \$7.8 million for 2010-11, for a total of \$17 million. This \$17 million and the above-referenced \$12.8 million produce

the \$29.8 million the Board needs to assess or further cut educational programs and services to children. Any cuts would be on top of the \$73.9 million cut in educational programs and services already suffered by Madison's children since the imposition of the revenue controls in 1993. *During this time period, the needs of Madison's students have dramatically increased. Special education costs, ELL learners and a growing poverty population (now 50% free and reduced lunch) demand more of the system, and more time and energy from teachers and other District staff, than could have been imagined when revenue controls were contrived.*

Had enough? Speak out regarding District management's suggested cuts. Appear at the second and last Board hearing Sunday, April 18, 1:00 p.m., Warner Park Recreation Center.

Making their voice heard for District children at the March 22 hearing were: MTI President **Steve Pike** (West); **Leanne Gilbertson** (Huegel); **Gary Stout** (Schenk); **Kathryn Burns** (Leopold); **Lori Frank** (formerly Stress/Challenge); **Sue Wagner** (Reading Recovery Leopold); **Scott Mullee** (Toki); **Bert Zipperer** (Sherman); **Erin Proctor** (Van Hise Special Education Assistant); **Kerry Motoviloff** (Elvehjem IRT); **Carolyn Konkol** (Lincoln Open Classroom); **Sarah Lord** (Math Resource Teacher); **Shqipe Sadiku** (Bilingual Resource Specialist); **Eric Arnold** (East); **Ellen Schneider** (Reading Resource Glendale); **Mary Ellen LaChance** (Reading Resource Glendale); **Carla Hacker** (Stress/Challenge); **Mary McBride** (Substitute Teacher) and **Lauren Mikol** (Lincoln Psychologist), and 41 others.

Pike told the Board that, by law, *they only needed to cut the \$1.2 million referenced above; that the Board had already - due to the revenue controls - cut 715 positions causing a major increase in class sizes, the gutting of special services, the elimination of advanced classes, and the assigning of responsibilities to teachers that once were performed by those with specific professional skills.* **Pike** encouraged the Board to raise local revenue to replace lost state aid, so that the quality of education would not be further impaired. **Pike's** points were reiterated by several other speakers.

Gilbertson emphasized that, because of the broken state school finance system, public schools in Wisconsin are dying a slow death, but that by acting now to fill the financial gap, the Board could "keep Madison schools breathing," but that if they do not "take the bold step of making up the difference that the state has failed to provide ... we will never make up that difference."

Lori Frank made a dramatic point by throwing from the podium several pages listing each and every cut caused by the revenue controls - since their implementation 17 years ago. She said everything in the Superintendent's four tiers

of recommendations is important, that it is "time to take a stand and raise taxes to the limit of (the Board's) ability, because it's all important!"

Saying he sees the effect every day of the 715 educators who are no longer there (not working with Madison's children), **Bert Zipperer** challenged the Board to "make your term count for something!"

Stating that she is "advocating for higher taxes", Lincoln psychologist **Lauren Mikol**, told the Board that, "education won't recover from additional layoffs."

"**Raise my taxes!**" Madison activist **Bill Scanlon** told the Board, "You can't cut anymore - our schools have been decimated by the irresponsibility in our Capitol. Raise my taxes as high as you can!" **Scanlon** said his three children had received an excellent education from Madison teachers, and that he wanted today's children to have that same opportunity.

Scanlon's message was repeated over and over. Only two of sixty speakers told the Board that they should not tax to the max.

Last October, **Paul Krugman**, a Yale economics professor, wrote in the New York Times, "*The rise of American education was, overwhelmingly, the rise of public education - and for the last 30 years our political scene has been dominated by the view that any and all government spending is a waste of taxpayer dollars. Education, as one of the largest components of public spending, has inevitably suffered ... We need to wake up and realize that one of the keys to our nation's historic success is now a wasting asset. Education made America great; neglect of education can reverse the process.*"

Let's hope that the members of the Madison Board of Education have the foresight - and the guts - to live up to their responsibility to protect and advance education.

Those who spoke out at the first hearing did their share. Now it is time for you to do your share. Plan now to speak.

**Sunday, April 18, 1:00 p.m.
Warner Park Recreation Center
1625 Northport Drive**

A point of great importance was made in a recent New York Times article, "The Uneducated American": "*If you had to explain America's economic success with one word, that word would be 'education'.*"