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April 07, 2009

4/6/2009 7:49:00 AM

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April 7 question is about necessities

This letter is in regards to the "urged no vote" to the April 7 referendum. First, let me begin by explaining how I dislike the word "referendum". I understand it has to be stated that way but it immediately seems to give people a negative opinion. This April 7 referendum is not about NICETIES it is about NECESITIES! It is about keeping our education system updated and running. It is about the future of our kids, our school systems and programs, our community and our future! Not about a new track, football field, pool viewing area, baseball diamond or an auditorium!

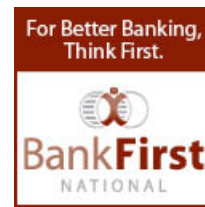
Back to your letter, I appreciate your opinion and you taking the time to do your research. Please excuse my skepticism as to the timing of your letter and your proposal offer to the board. Why did you not bring this so called proposal to the board or community BEFORE the vote so we would have options? Why not some explanation in your letter that unfortunately cannot be rebutted until after the vote on April 7? The problem I have now is, people on the fence saying, well we can cast a no vote as Mr. Hartmann has the solution to the problem! A so-called solution most of us have no idea what you are talking about. A little backdoor politics perhaps?

Please let us know if you are going to be proposing your offer the board on the 13th as I am very interested in hearing it? I also do not believe anyone wants to eliminate anyone's job! I also don't know of anyone who doesn't truly need their job to survive economically in today's hard times. Reading into your letter however, I am not so sure it is the responsibility of the employees of the district themselves to be forced to bail out the entire district, as you put it in your apparent solution? As there are a few more people than just two that will be drastically affected should this referendum not have passed?

No one wants to pay more taxes or spend money on unneeded expenditures! I believe we are all in this together and times are going to get tougher before getting easier.

Respectfully,

Dennis Gries



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READER OPINION-Reader supports Tuesday vote for Kiel Schools

To the editor,

On April 7 we the voters of the Kiel School District will have a chance to decide if we will keep our school programs at the current level or if we choose to let the quality of education be on a decline.

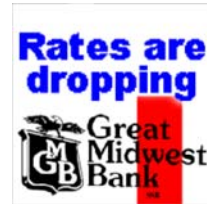
With the increased cost of new technology that all our kids will need to face the new challenges, I feel we cannot afford to let them fall behind, as they will be the future leaders that will be running our country.

I hope that all the residents had a chance to take advantage of the learning sessions, to better understand the situation, visit our schools, ask questions, and if you don't agree on certain aspects of our educational system, let your concerns be known. Remember this is the only part of our tax dollar that we have any say in how it is being spent.

Our school system will only be as good as we the residents choose it to be. For those reasons I will be voting yes on April 7.

Sincerely,

Don Mogenson, Kiel



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READER OPINION-State holds many a cards for school budget

To the editor,

Many people believe that public schools can tax as much as they want for operations and that these citizens that attend the annual meeting are the only ones that control the school's taxing authority.

This was true until 15 years ago, but now it is primarily the State of Wisconsin that controls public school's taxing ability.

During the 1993-1995 State of Wisconsin budget cycle, legislators passed a new funding formula for public schools in an effort to hold down local school property taxes. This legislation is known as Revenue Limits. Along with this new revenue limit formula to "cap" what school districts can tax local property owners, the state also agreed to help fund schools in Wisconsin by aiding them with two-thirds funding and developing legislation known as the QEO (Qualified Economic Offer) which protects all of the teachers' benefits and guarantees a 3.8 percent total salary and benefits package should a voluntary settlement be unattainable. These three things-Revenue Limits, Equalization Aid and QEO-make up what the public school system calls the "Three Legged Stool."

The Revenue Limit is used to establish the amount of tax revenue available for general operations, non-referendum debt payments and capital projects. Outside of the revenue limits are taxes for referendum debt payments (new school) and community service programs (open swim and weight room programs).

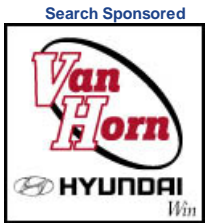
For the taxing portion of the revenue limits, it is important to have a general understanding of how schools compute the revenue limit and tax. Though the computation is not a simple one to explain, in general, it is the district's three-year average of student membership multiplied by the previous year's revenue per member, plus the state's allowable per member increase. The amount of money that districts can then levy local property owners is the Revenue Limit (as calculated above) less the amount of Equalization Aid received from the State of Wisconsin. Equalization Aid is computed by the state, not school districts, and is based on the previous year's shared costs. Chilton is currently aided at approximately 67 percent which means that two-thirds of our revenue limit is covered by state aid, the remainder is what we are allowed to tax local property owners.

So, as you can see, school districts are not allowed to tax local residents what they wish as was the case many years ago, but instead are limited by the state government and its rules regarding revenues from taxes. Schools can attain additional revenues for operation in the form of individual fees and donations. An example of this would be the participation fee of \$20 for the high school Foods class that helps offset a portion of the grocery costs. The only other way schools can increase their income would be by going to referendum to exceed the revenue limits. This kind of referendum is happening more often as declining enrollments and minimal revenue increases by the state continue to tighten the school's ability to maintain programs to meet state and federal program requirements with less resources.

We encourage all members of the Chilton Public School District to attend the annual meeting and budget hearing which will be held this fall. At this meeting, district staff will provide additional information regarding the school's financial structure, how the structure affects the district budget as well as future budgets. For more information, please contact the District Office at 849-8109 or check the Business Office section of the District Web site at www.chilton.k12.wi.us.



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Lisa Lau, business manager
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