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IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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More Questions Than Answers In Proposed Constitutional Amendment

SPRINGBORO, Ohio – On Wednesday, Jan. 17, the public was informed that a new Ohio constitutional amendment was being touted by a group called Getting It Right For Ohio's Future. This consortium of 12 educational groups is tackling one of the most difficult problems facing our state – how to fund public education.

To that end, I applaud this group's effort. While most superintendents and academia people are still trying to decide whether this plan has merit – including myself - others already have weighed in. Some in the collegiate world are applauding the plan. Many others, including large city mayors, are saying there are too many questions left unanswered.

Some of the favorable factors of the proposed amendment include exempting senior and disabled citizens from property taxes on the first \$40,000 of the market value of their home. That certainly is a step in the right direction, and something I would support wholeheartedly.

It also calls for an independent commission to determine what the funding level should be, based on “all types of students, including special education, vocational education, gifted or economically disadvantaged.” This is an extremely important part of the plan.

During the most recent operating levy campaign (November 2005), our levy committee did an excellent job explaining to our residents that despite the fact that the state Department of Education says it allocates more than \$5,000 per child, it “charges off” a certain amount of money per district, based on a formula involving the community's ability to generate its own money.

At the time, Springboro Community Schools was the 7th wealthiest school district in the state, based on personal income tax. As a result, that amount was cut in half, so that the majority of the money needed to educate children in our district must come from local taxpayers through their property taxes.

It is important to note that four times – FOUR TIMES – our Ohio Supreme Court has ruled that this kind of funding is unconstitutional. The proposed amendment would change the “charge off” factor.

Unfortunately, once you get through the bureaucracy of the proposed amendment, you will find that it is missing at least one key component – a financial plan. It does have a document that shows a comparison of the funding models, but unfortunately, the proposed model doesn’t show numbers, just TBD (to be determined) percentages.

In 2007, the state gave basic aid of about \$5,403 for each student (remember, Springboro doesn’t receive that much, but less financially able districts do). In the current formula, that would account for about 43-percent of school funding. Local funding was 49-percent, with federal funding (mostly special education) at 8-percent.

In the new model, federal funding stays the same, but the percentages between state and local funding basically flip flop, so that the state pays about half of the educational costs for all districts.

While I am certainly keeping an open mind to this proposal, I would encourage our residents to learn as much as they can before they choose their position for this amendment. It is important to remember, whether or not this proposed amendment is enacted, the burden for about half of the cost to educate a child will still fall into the local taxpayers’ laps.

For information about Getting It Right For Ohio’s Future, visit www.rightforohio.org.

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