

STEPS 2007 School Board Candidate Survey

Dear Neighbors,

Since 2001, I have published the responses of Beaver creek school board candidates to questions designed to ascertain their commitment to cost-effectiveness and ability to uphold their oath of office.

This year, the survey returns with single question regarding implementation of all-day kindergarten in Beaver creek. In addition to the question, briefing materials are provided.

The oath of office for board members is as follows:

Do you solemnly swear (or affirm) that you will support the Constitution of the United States and the Constitution of the State of Ohio; and that you will faithfully and impartially discharge your duties as members of the Board of Education of the Beaver creek City School District, Greene County, Ohio, to the best of your ability, and in accordance with the laws now in effect and hereafter to be enacted, during your continuance in said office, and until your successor is elected and qualified.

Question for Board candidates:

Other school districts in the Miami Valley have classrooms they can not afford to staff. What steps will you take to avoid this problem in Beaver creek, especially regarding Governor Strickland's recent mandate for all-day kindergarten? Have the Governor's supporters made the case that all-day kindergarten in Beaver creek deserves support from taxpayers in Beaver creek and throughout Ohio for additional space and staff?

Background Materials:

The State of Ohio

April 24, 2009

Ohio may be facing a bigger budget hole in two years than the governor dealt with this time around. State lawmakers are rushing to get a new spending plan in place with just a few weeks left in the fiscal year. Talking about these issues and more are Ohio Republican Party chair Kevin DeWine and Ohio Democratic Party chair Chris Redfern.

Kevin DeWine: What we're doing is we are building a 54 billion dollar budget on 48 billion dollars worth of revenue. And so the next budget--And what we're doing--essentially is we're paying for a whole bunch of things that are ongoing expenses with one-time money. Which creates the problem that Mary Taylor was identifying a couple weeks ago when she stood up and said, wait a minute, the road--the bridge--is out ahead. That's the issue that the people of Ohio need to understand. We're paying for ongoing expenses with one-time money in the school funding budget--for instance--which the House Democrats came out this week, there's 800 million dollars worth of Federal stimulus money in the school funding budget. In a school funding budget that cuts school funding by 113 million dollars compared to the budget that we're in today.

So if I'm a school superintendent in good old Greene County, Ohio--Beaver creek, Ohio USA, I know that the next school funding budget has 113 million dollars less than the one I'm in today and it has an 800 billion--800 million--dollar hole. It's going to be tough to fill that and get back to even in the next budget. People need to be aware of that.

Chris Redfern: With all due respect to that superintendent, I hope he or she was actually watching television for the last year when we had a Presidential candidate and now a president who said, I'm going to shift some of the burden away from the state government to the Federal government. I suspect, in having had been to many of the events where now-President Obama committed himself to accepting more of the financial obligation of public education--that those commitments for the Federal--from the Federal government--will continue.



October 18, 2009

Guest Column: All-day kindergarten will punish good school districts

By *KAREN L. GILLMOR*
Guest Column

Years ago, we had to replace our furnace. It wasn't properly heating our home, and with winter on its way it was a problem we couldn't ignore. So, of course, we bought a new furnace. We didn't, however, buy a new furnace for all of our neighbors. Their furnaces were working just fine. We would have been fixing problems that didn't exist -- an unnecessary and very expensive undertaking.

Unfortunately, government has a bad habit of creating solutions to problems that don't exist, and then sticking taxpayers with the bill. And this is exactly what Gov. Ted Strickland is doing with his call for mandatory all-day kindergarten for every Ohio school district.

Under the governor's plan, every district, regardless of its rating, must offer all-day kindergarten by fall 2010. The mandate was written into law as part of the state budget bill passed in July 2009. However, no additional funds accompanied this edict.

Many school districts already offer all-day kindergarten. In fact, it's required for districts receiving state poverty-based assistance. For districts that need to address early learning deficiencies, all-day kindergarten may be a reasonable solution. But for many high-performing school districts, all-day kindergarten is neither wanted by parents nor needed by children. In these districts, the fiscal and programmatic impact of mandated all-day kindergarten threatens to be severe.

Many successful school districts across the state are using established, effective early learning programs to ensure student preparedness. Dublin City Schools is one such district. Currently, Dublin offers two literacy readiness programs for kindergartners needing extra support: One program provides an additional hour of targeted instruction for young children who need a little extra support, and the other provides a half-day of additional instruction for those children who need more. Testing shows that by the end of the school year, these programs have essentially closed what began as a significant gap in performance. Remarkably, Dublin City Schools achieves these results with existing funds. It's just one example of a highly effective, well-targeted program that provides exactly the right amount of support.

Unfortunately, as a result of the all-day kindergarten mandate, Dublin City Schools will be forced to discontinue this highly successful program and replace it with all-day kindergarten -- a move that will cost the district an estimated \$1.2 million in staffing alone. That doesn't take into account other associated costs of program materials and additional classroom space.

For districts like Dublin City Schools, which received a smaller percentage of funding for everyday costs from the state in the new state budget, the additional expense for all-day kindergarten will likely be borne by the local community. In many communities, all-day kindergarten is seen as little more than an unfunded mandate.

In his 1993 treatise on unfunded mandates published in the Harvard Journal on Legislation, my late husband, U.S. Rep. Paul E. Gillmor, identified the burden that unfunded mandates place on state and local governments. Unfunded mandates cause these entities to decrease or eliminate other crucial services to meet the mandates' requirements, negatively affecting their budgets, decision making power and autonomy.

My colleague, State Sen. Gary Cates, has introduced legislation to delay the implementation of all-day kindergarten until fall 2011. As well-intended as it is, it's little comfort for districts such as Dublin, which will be forced to abandon successful and far less expensive programs in exchange for the unnecessary and expensive proposition of all-day kindergarten. In Dublin, this mandate could mean a 22 1/2 new teaching positions and a new school building.

Strickland calls his education plan a "student-centered" plan. Unfortunately, his all-day kindergarten mandate is an expensive, one-size-fits-all solution to a problem that for many successful Ohio school districts simply doesn't exist. Let the Ohio public school districts that rank "excellent" or "excellent with distinction" do what they obviously do with great success, and don't punish their communities with unwanted government intrusion.

State Sen. Karen L. Gillmor, R-Tiffin, represents the 26th Ohio Senate District.

**Q&A with Jeff Hardin, Ohio State Board of Education Member Elected in District 10
(Representing Clark, Greene Counties and South to the Ohio River)**

Our local board members will be held to our community's expectations for careful stewardship of public funds. Mr. Hardin's response to the following questions will provide valuable guidance as they seek to fulfill their oath-sworn responsibilities.

Q1: Did the Governor provide clear criteria for constitutionality and evidence that HB-1 is cost-effective in addressing those criteria? Or did our Governor rely on endorsements of his plan made by advocates of increased education spending with little regard for careful stewardship of public funds?

A: No. This Governor has shown a blatant disregard for the constitutionality of all of his actions in regard to education. The requirements of HB-1 the Governor and later the Democrat controlled House supported were made to pay back the special interest groups that contribute to their campaigns the most. It had no credible evidence that any of this material would work in Ohio.

Q2: Did the Governor rely upon experts familiar with Ohio's school funding litigation and Ohio's approach to meeting its constitutional obligations? Or did our Governor rely on out-of-state consultants unfamiliar with progress made to date—including Ohio's expectations for careful stewardship of public funds?

A: No. Ohio is ranked 6th in the nation in education. The two states used in the evidence based model were in the bottom 20%.

Q3: How do HB-1 supporters reconcile the additional mandates of HB-1 with the *DeRolph I* decision finding unfunded/underfunded mandates unconstitutional?

A: I find a total disregard for the mandates of the *DeRolph* decision. Rural districts are penalized and urban inner city districts are richly rewarded under HB-1. When compared to a voter chart it is apparent that the big cities, which vote predominantly Democrat, are rewarded with cash while the rural and suburban districts, traditionally Republican, are penalized.

Q4: How does the HB-1 cost-out address all requirements enumerated by Justice Resnick in *DeRolph II*?

A: I find no correlation. In short, it does not meet the criteria.

Q5: How do HB-1 supporters reconcile the protracted phase-in of HB-1 with the *DeRolph III* decision requiring full funding in the immediately following budget?

A: I have found no supporters who will try to justify it; just as I have found no media member to pose it.

Q6: Do local districts have adequate information on HB-1 impacts to produce credible five-year forecasts by October 31 as required by law? Do districts believe promised increases in state support are credible? Will the increased state support fund the additional mandates? What alternatives are available if the state can not fulfill its promises? Do the five-year forecasts actually show that districts will reduce reliance on local property taxes?

A: No. The state budget relied substantially upon bogus numbers for gambling receipts to balance the budget. This was a shell game at its finest trying to sell the public on the Democrats being the fiscally responsible party that valued education. No. Districts are scared the economy will continue in a downturn and the cash will not appear. Anyone who says prayer does not belong in school should reconsider after seeing this year's state budget process.

Q7: Do you know of individuals or organizations endorsing HB-1 insisting upon satisfactory answers to the above questions?

A: No. I find most leaders of groups who supported HB-1 to be very uncomfortable right now. The strongest supporters of HB-1 are the members of the Governor's staff.

My public stances are well known. They are mine and do not reflect the opinion of the board to which I was elected.

Background Correspondence for *Q&A with Jeff Hardin, Ohio State Board of Education*

Dear Mr. Hardin,

I write to request your assistance in gathering information required for local school board candidates to evaluate the education policy changes included in HB-1, Ohio's recent budget.

For the last decade, I have posed questions to candidates for the Beavercreek Board of Education. These questions are carefully designed to supplement those posed by the League of Women Voters, Beavercreek Women's League, and Beavercreek High School students. I post replies at <http://beavercreek.ohiosteps.org>.

This year is especially challenging due to the necessity of evaluating the mandates in HB-1, particularly all-day kindergarten. Our community has not supported all-day kindergarten in the course of our two major facilities expansions of this decade—or for previous decades. As former Ohio School Facilities Commission head Michael Shoemaker observed, districts "get hammered by a change in statewide policy that no one knew was coming."

Representative Jarrod Martin (R-Beavercreek) disputes the adequacy of Governor Strickland's economic policies and Senator Chris Widener (R-Springfield) questions the priorities implicit in Ohio's budget. Ohio Democratic Chair Chris Redfern dismissed the concerns of Beavercreek parents—raised by Kevin DeWine—regarding the sustainability of Ohio's budget.

Hence, all-day kindergarten—a large expense for our district—is mandated in a budget seen as overspending, unreflective of Ohio's true priorities, unsupported by policies necessary for Ohio's economic recovery, and supposedly assured by continued federal bailouts that Ohio's Congressional delegation never endorsed.

We have five candidates for three board seats in November's election. The successful candidates will need to reconcile our community's high standards for stewardship with the mandates of HB-1. They will need your help to determine if the supporters of HB-1 share our standards for stewardship or if HB-1 has fallen short. It is particularly important to ensure that the new mandates are HB-1 are constitutional before we invest in the facilities required by the new mandates.

Granted, like our State Representative and Senator, you did not support the education provisions of HB-1. Nonetheless, your colleagues on the Ohio State Board of Education did vote support. So perhaps other State Board members found satisfactory answers to the questions Beavercreek would expect our district board members to pursue. Simply put, district board members who approve building facilities we cannot afford to staff can expect to lose their next election—if they choose to risk the community's wrath by running at all. In contrast, Governor Strickland dealt with similar concerns by shooting the messenger—whether the former head of the Ohio School Facilities Commission or former Ohio Superintendent of Public Instruction Zelman.

In any case, our local board members will be held to our community's expectations for careful stewardship of public funds. Your response to the following questions will provide valuable guidance as they seek to fulfill their oath-sworn responsibilities.

Mr. Hardin Replies

Dear Mr. Price,

Thank you for your succinct questions. Briefly the questions are answered as follows: [*See Q&A with Jeff Hardin.*]

Due to poor priorities in Columbus, no future increases will fund the mandates under HB-1 in Beavercreek. I have not had time to evaluate the 5-year forecasts but I believe that they are currently useless due to the instability of the state's revenue flows.

There are supposed to be exemptions and a proposed extension until the 2011 budget is pending in the Senate. The State Superintendent is under great pressure to be stingy with the exemptions, but I am in Beavercreek's corner. Shortly I will be presenting a banner for nine consecutive years as a district that is Excellent with Distinction. The legislature should be looking at Ohio models that work and forming the policy after them. Instead they look to Ohio's Big Eight Districts—among Ohio's worst—to establish policy guidelines. Perhaps we should revoke their high school diplomas for gross stupidity.