

A Message From Our Board of Education: WE NEED YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT!

Amidst the turmoil in Madison, school boards across the state have been studying their district finances, trying to plan for best and worst-case scenarios. The Fort Atkinson School District Board of Education is no exception.

We have had an opportunity to review the impact the Budget Repair Bill would have on our schools and the proposed Biennium Budget. In trying to erase the \$3.5 billion state deficit, Governor Walker will be reducing state aid to public schools by nearly \$750 million. In Fort Atkinson, the revenue cap decrease per student will be \$545 less in 2011-2012 and remain flat at that rate again in 2012-2013. This translates to a \$1.5 million reduction in our revenue. Governor Walker has indicated that in making these cuts, he will also give school districts the tools to neutralize the revenue reductions through higher district employee contributions to their pensions and health care.

Per health care contributions, the Fort Atkinson School District health insurance plan for employees is cheaper than the state plan, and has always been kept in check through competitive bidding when renewal rates came in higher than the projections we deemed reasonable.

Our health insurance *expense savings* under the Governor's plan would be relatively small (\$100,000), as our employees already contribute 10% towards the cost of their premiums. Some districts with lower or no contributions will realize a greater opportunity for savings. In other words, the tools the governor speaks of have *great disparity* among school districts depending upon what employees previously contributed. We estimate that on the expense saving side from employee pension and insurance premium contributions we will save \$940,000. However, in comparison with the revenue cap reduction of \$1,512,375, we have a \$572,375 shortfall.

Our district has worked hard to raise revenue sources, maximize efficiencies, and make reductions when necessary, saving over one million dollars in the last year alone. Prior to the Governor's Repair Bill, a Citizen Taskforce recommended last June to continue to exceed the revenue limit by \$694,000, the same level approved in April of 2006. Our Board of Education approved this recommendation with a sunset of three years and is placing a question before the citizens on the April 5th spring election ballot.

If voters approve this referendum, we will have maintained the same level of support from 2006 through 2014, but we will need to continue to look for ways to reduce expenses. Our goal is to remain a beacon district of educational excellence, as that is what our citizens and students have come to expect, and we feel, is our duty to provide. Our mission in continuing finer education in this community is to provide opportunities that help our students reach their academic and personal potential. We believe that we will not merely endure but prevail through this difficult and uncertain time.

For more information regarding the April 5th referendum and the repair bill, please go to our website at www.foortschools.org and click on Referendum Information. Thank you—The Board of Education.” You will also find enclosed a Referendum Information Document that addresses the most frequently asked questions.

Members of the Board of Education
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