

# Don't criticize Dann for K-plus ruling

To the Editor:

I have been reading with much interest, and I must confess some level of amusement the reporting of the circumstances surrounding the K-plus and Metro school affairs. It seems strange that Worthington School Board members Marc Schare and David Bressman saw fit to chastise Attorney General Marc Dann for doing his job.

Having arrived at a finding what was Dann supposed to do? Sit on the opinions until the end of the year? To clear the question of timing it might be useful to determine when the request for the opinions was made.

The issue of whether districts could charge parents for consumable materials came up in the late 80s early 90s when the practice started. Likewise the legality of "pay to play" emerged when districts found it necessary to do so. In both cases it was deemed that charging is permissible and does not violate the concept of a "free public education." It was deemed that co-curricular activities are not a component of "basic education," per se.

Unless things have changed since the 80s, it has been a well established principle in case law that Boards of Education can only do that which is expressly authorized by the General Assembly. It would thus seem that it was the General Assembly, (that should have been aware of the precedent) that was remiss by not giving authorization for the charges when it enacted the K-plus program as an option for districts.

Under those circumstances, perhaps what is the strangest pronouncement came from State Senator Steve Stivers who referring to the "specific authorization" requirement has been quoted as saying: "That's a very Communist view of the world - unless the government will let you do something, you can't do it."

Perhaps, according to Stivers, following the law should be seen as "subversive." Maybe that explains why the Legislature has been ignoring the deRolph decision regarding over-reliance on property taxes to fund education in Ohio.

Abramo Ottolenghi

# Board shouldn't approve costly health care plans

To the Editor:

As a Worthington taxpayer with some knowledge of the health care industry, I was very concerned about the Sept. 26 *Worthington News* article, "Health plan fires up board member." After reading it, I decided another appropriate headline might have been, "Open checkbook for district's health care".

According to the article, the district's health care costs are expected to increase from \$9 million in 2007 to \$11.5 million in 2008 - an increase of almost 28 percent! Compare this to the 6.1 percent average increase for last year's premiums that were released a few weeks ago by the Kaiser Family Foundation.

In 2008, a Worthington School District employee will pay 6 to 7 percent of the monthly premiums for family or single coverage, a far cry from Kaiser's reported findings of 27 percent for family and 15 percent for single coverage. So, as taxpayers, should we just open up our checkbooks to cover the district's share of uncontrolled or, rather, excessive health care costs?

In addition to board member Marc Schare's suggestions to investigate the pros and cons of self-funding and investing in wellness (to address the primary driver of rising health care costs - inadequate investment in health through prevention), perhaps before the board faces employee health benefits decisions next year, it should:

- Consider increasing cost-sharing so as to not insulate employees from the health care cost equation.

- Address concerns about potential provider disruption. Employees who choose to stay with a non-preferred doctor could do so; they'd just pay more for that choice.

- Support efforts to make health care more affordable by actively promoting quality and efficiency in our local health care system.

- Ensure there is no conflict of interest between all parties involved in the negotiations, including brokers. Surely, there was no impropriety in the board's decision to select the incumbent health plan who also happened to be the highest bidding carrier.

Sarah Durfee