

Prepared Notes for State Budget Financial Impact

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So I just have one or two thoughts to share on the state budget and its impact on Worthington.

There is one overriding question here and that question is this – How much redistribution is necessary to achieve the educational policy objectives of the state and are the incentives and disincentives in the right places?

The FY14 District Profile Report says that Worthington gets around 15.7 cents in state education funding for every dollar it contributes in state income tax. The implication is that if Worthington taxpayers want money to flow to Worthington Schools, they should pass local levies and quit lobbying the state to raise more money for education since we see so little of it. The explicit goal of this budget was to redirect state money to those districts who do not have the capacity to raise it themselves, implying that if you do have the capacity to pass levies, you're on your own. I'm not sure that's the message the legislature wanted to send, but it's sure the message that I received.

For example, our TPP phaseout is based on a percentage of total resources. Essentially, the State of Ohio has deemed it necessary to punish our constituents for passing a levy back in 2012 – a levy that was specifically required because of the uncertainties revolving around TPP in the first place. Had we not passed that levy, we would be receiving additional state funding. I'm not sure that's a message that the state wants to be sending to its 600+ school districts.

Our friends up north in Olentangy are leading the charge to a minimum funding level – perhaps as much as the state gives community schools. In the meantime, the state should do the only thing it can under these circumstances, which is to reduce or eliminate unfunded mandates. Unfortunately, while there was one provision in HB64 that had the potential for local school districts to request a waiver for any part of the Ohio Revised Code or the Ohio Administrative Code, it was eliminated. The legislature did promise to replace it with Senate Bill 3, which offers mandate relief for 5 mandates out of the hundreds in the revised code and none of which are particularly beneficial to Worthington. Given the paucity of funding we get from the state, the least they could have done was provide us with mandate relief. Maybe next time....

So the question of the 2015 budget process for Worthington and districts like it is – how much redistribution is enough? What obligation, if any, does that state have to fund our district and if that obligation is minimal, what obligation does our district have to follow the mandates of the state? We won't get an answer tonight, but it's my hope that we start that dialogue at the state level because eventually, the state will have to deal with the questions raised by Derolph and it's best to do so in a time of relative prosperity.

