

Hinsdale District 86 Votes to Keep Money In Taxpayers' Pockets

The District 86 Board of Education voted Monday night to approve a flat tax or ZERO levy. Under this measure, the district will collect next year the same amount of taxes collected this past year.

Board members voted 4-3 for the flat levy, with Victor Casini, Ed Corcoran, Board President Claudia Manley, and Richard Skoda casting the yes votes to keep approximately \$1.2 million in taxpayers' pockets. Kay Gallo, Michael Kuhn and Jennifer Planson voted against the flat levy.

At the end of this school year, District 86's reserves (or fund balances) will be \$56.7 million, which is about 68% of the annual budget. If the levy were to increase by the 1.7% CPI, the District's reserves would have ballooned to \$83.4 million by 2019.

Board members agreed, enough is enough. And while this action seems straight forward and the most fiscally responsible measure, critics are calling for more money, more money. As mentioned in the *Chicago Tribune*, governmental entities are going out for dinner and ordering the biggest and most expensive item on the menu regardless of whether they are hungry or not.

But how much money should the district stockpile in its reserves? Should the district, or any governmental entity for that matter, overtax residents in order to pad their budgets and build large savings? Governmental entities are not depository institutions. While it's easy to say it's for the good of the schools, the village or park district, how is taking more money than what is needed good for the taxpayers?

If you combine the notion to take as much money as you can from the taxpayer, along with the fact the budgets are composed 10 months after this money is in the hands of the government, what incentive is there to really cut costs? It's like having your children ask you for \$100 today with no idea how they are going to spend it next month. Are you going to blindly hand over the \$100? And then, will your child look for ways to reduce that \$100 when its burning a hole in their pocket? Governmental entities are no different.

The Zero or Flat Levy is not a new, radical, or destructive idea. Several entities have been using the zero levy for years. DuPage County has used the zero levy for the past four years. Skokie has utilized the zero levy to benefit taxpayers for 22 years! School districts have also adopted zero levies and some have even under levied, without effecting services or programing. In fact, in 2005, District 181 under levied by about \$10 million. Has that action been destructive to District 181? Have services and programs been slashed? Have the children suffered (for a point of reference the current freshman class was in 1st grade in 2005)? Has District 181 fallen from the elite ranks of elementary districts?

Its clear school districts can do more with less. We hope District 86 will soon prove to be the norm versus the exception in local government. Ultimately, it will be up to the voters to elect candidates who will demand more, while pledging zero tax increases for taxpayers.