

WE NEED SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM IN ILLINOIS NOW!

QUESTION: DOES ILLINOIS NEED SCHOOL FUNDING REFORM?

ANSWER: YES!

The Problem: The way Illinois funds education is both unfair and inadequate. The end result, the state fails to give every school enough money to provide a quality education to all children. The reason for this is simple: the state of Illinois is broke. Every year it raises less in tax revenue than what it needs to fund schools, healthcare or anything else. So instead of doing what is right and raising enough state tax revenue to fund education fairly and adequately, Illinois simply shirks its school funding responsibility, leaving thousands of children with an inadequate education.

QUESTION: WHY IS SCHOOL FUNDING INADEQUATE?

ANSWER: FUNDING RELIES ON LOCAL WEALTH

Because the state does not fund its fair share of schools, the primary responsibility for education funding falls on local property taxes. This is what makes the system unfair. It ties the quality of the public education a school can give a child to the wealth of the community in which that child lives. If a child is fortunate enough to live in a wealthy community, her locally funded public schools will be top notch. If on the other hand, she lives in a low-income area, her school simply will not have the money to provide a quality education. Tying the quality of the public education a child receives to the wealth of her local community is not just unfair, it is both morally and socially wrong.

QUESTION: WHAT IS THE EDUCATION FUNDING ADVISORY BOARD—OR EFAB?

ANSWER: Created by Governor Ryan in 2000 the Illinois Education Funding Advisory Board (**EFAB**) is a nonpartisan board, made up of representatives of education, business and the public. Both Governors Ryan and Blagojevich have appointed members to the board.

EFAB's mission each year is to identify a minimum per-pupil foundation funding level, based on the actual cost of providing an adequate education. EFAB has recommended a per child foundation level tied to the actual cost of an academic curriculum of sufficient quality to permit an efficiently operated school district to obtain the result of having two-thirds of its non-at-risk children pass the Illinois standardized tests.

QUESTION: WHAT DOES EFAB RECOMMEND FOR FY 2008?

ANSWER: EFAB has recommended a foundation level of \$6,974 per child for FY 2008.¹ That is significantly more than the \$5,734 per student the General Assembly passed in their FY 2008 budget.

QUESTION: HOW MUCH WILL THAT COST?

ANSWER: ABOUT \$2 BILLION per year.

QUESTION: CAN ILLINOIS AFFORD EFAB?

ANSWER: YES! The funding of EFAB would cost Illinois less than one-half of one percent of the state's economy. Given that Illinois has the fifth largest population and economy in the nation, yet ranks only 48th in tax burden,² Illinois can raise the tax revenue needed to fund schools fairly and still rank in the bottom 10 nationally in tax burden.

QUESTION: WILL FUNDING EFAB HELP ELIMINATE THE CURRENT FUNDING UNFAIRNESS?

ANSWER: YES! EFAB will make school funding more equitable across the state by helping break the tie between local wealth and school quality.

QUESTION: HAS THE STATE EVER FUNDED THE EFAB RECOMMENDATION?

ANSWER: NO! The state has never fully funded EFAB's recommendations.

¹ Figure based on the FY 2006 recommended level of \$6,405 adjusted for inflation based on the Bureau of Labor Statistics Economic Cost Index or ECI. EFAB recommends adjusting the recommendation each year by the ECI.

² Federation of Tax Administrators.