

No Standing News

Since we have no standing, we stand with those left standing.

Volume I

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They Said It...Reality Check on the "It's Worth It" Committee

Pity the Rolla School District voters with no critical reading skills. They are sitting ducks for the most manipulative and misleading campaign "facts" we have ever seen. Here are some of the worst examples - so far.

1. Quote "BECAUSE THE LOCAL INCREASE TO THE PROPERTY TAXES WOULD BE MATCHED BY INCREASED STATE FUNDING, THE MAJORITY OF THE COST TO IMPROVE THE SALARY SCHEDULES WOULD ACTUALLY BE BORNE BY THE STATE." -Supt. Ewing in Report of the Business Partners Meeting, Aug 31, 2000.

Truth Not at all! In this and other documents to the school board and the "Business Partners" during the 10-month run up to this election, Ewing said the amount needed for raises was \$1,440,000 to \$1,800,000 (the Committee uses both figures). By our calculations, the full 80¢ levy will yield a minimum of **\$1,559,893 annually**, enough to cover the salary increases and benefits. But the additional state aid of \$1.50 for each new tax dollar from the levy will add another **\$2,339,984 annually**. That's 1.5 times more than they need for salaries. After the second year, the "majority of the cost to improve the salary schedules" will NOT "be borne by the state"- all the state aid money will be gravy. They never talk about this windfall and what they plan to do with it. The levy could have been only 40¢ and with the state aid would have provided enough for the increases.

2. Quote "WHEN FULLY PHASED IN, THIS WILL TOTAL AN INCREASE OF \$8.20 PER MONTH FOR AN AVERAGE HOME"; THE "AVERAGE" HOME IN ROLLA, THEY SAY, IS VALUED AT \$64,700. from FAQ's by Committee Co-Chairs, Wiggins and

Strassner marked "NOT FOR HANDOUT-DO NOT COPY AND DISTRIBUTE" and their "Fast Facts" tax calculations.

Truth This levy is actually a 23% total increase in your real estate and personal property tax! Quoting a monthly rate increase rather than a yearly amount is deliberately misleading. Some people are not catching the "per month" qualifier in their example and think the increase will only be **\$8.20 per year**. It would be more honest to say the levy tax on real estate valued at \$64,700 will be an additional **\$98.40** a year. It would be refreshingly honest if they would tell people that the tax also applies to personal property. (To figure your new tax amount if this passes, see our SmartVoter Tax Calculator <<http://www.rollanet.org/~rwnash/SmartVoter.pdf>>).

3. Quote "*SCHOOL BOARD RESTRICTED THE USE (OF THE LEVY) FOR SALARIES & BENEFITS." from a business card handout paid for by the "It's Worth It" Committee, Bill Jenks & Karen Daily-Treas.

Truth The only vote taken by the school board was to implement the 10-12% salary schedule increases over three years. The Board keeps having closed meetings on administrative raises (notably Ewing's), but they haven't taken the vote yet because they know when they do, his raise becomes public record. They don't want voters to know until after it's too late for a backlash. Does the ballot language, "For the purpose of attracting and retaining staff"... sound like a binding promise? Voters have to decide. Repainting classrooms could be said to improve teaching conditions "for the purpose of attracting and retaining staff." The levy resolution included this phrase "in order to pay a portion of the District's costs of attracting and retaining staff." What is this "portion" business and why is this wording different? Rubbery ballot wording and "intentions" are only acceptable from elected officials who are known for

their collective and individual integrity and have earned the trust of voters.

4. Quote“ROLLA STARTING SALARY IS ONLY \$22,000.” **The centerpiece claim of this campaign.**

TruthThis is hair-splitting. They have a \$22,000 entry-level salary printed on their salary scale but have admitted, when pressed, that they don't actually use it. They say they add a \$2,000 “overlay.” Is there a difference between \$24,000 “overlaid” and \$24,000? They start teachers at \$24,000 or much higher depending on experience. The whole issue of how they recruit, hire and compensate deserves in-depth examination. No competitive organization, public or private, gives only across-the-board raises. That practice rewards incompetence and is a disincentive to retention of the best teachers.

5. Quote - “(A CERTIFIED TEACHER JUST OUT OF SCHOOL) CAN EXPECT TO EARN \$22,000 DURING THEIR FIRST YEAR OF TEACHING IN ROLLA.” - **Dana Rapier, President of the Rolla School Board in RDN interview 3/20/01.**

Truth(See number 4.)

6. Quote “WHAT DO YOU THINK OF THE SALARIES TEACHERS IN THE ROLLA SCHOOLS ARE PAID, PARTICULARLY A **FIRST-YEAR TEACHER WHOSE CURRENT SALARY IS \$22,000?**” **RDN interviewing two students 3/21/01.**

TruthRDN demonstrates how easily gossip can become a “well-known fact.” The phony \$22,000 starting salary is now a “current salary” of a first-year teacher.

7. Quote “THE AVERAGE TEACHER’S SALARY IN ROLLA IS \$33,987, THE AVERAGE ADMINISTRATOR’S SALARY IS \$67,998.” -“**Let’s Talk**” **publication by Supt. Larry Ewing, Nov. 2000, (and repeated ad nauseam by the proponents).**

Quote “YOU CAN’T GO BY AVERAGES.” (Speaking of teachers’ salaries)
-**Dana Rapier, President of the Rolla School Board, RDN interview 3/20/01.**

Truth The un-averaged numbers look like this. Larry Ewing, Supt. Of Schools - **\$105,000**; Deputy Supt. Leonard Westbrook - **\$85,881. Source****Rolla Public Schools Salary Schedule** <http://www.rollanet.org/~rwnash/ROLLA_SCHOOL_SALARIES.pdf>. For comparison Governor of Missouri - **\$112,755**, Secretary of State - **\$90,471**. When Ewing gets his **new increase of \$15,645** over the next three years, he will be making **\$120,000**.

8. Quote“**Q. WHAT HAPPENS IF WE DON’T PASS THIS LEVY? A. 1) LESS EXPERIENCED AND POSSIBLY LESS QUALIFIED TEACHERS; 2) LARGER CLASS SIZES; 3) BOTH 1 & 2 RESULT IN A DECREASED QUALITY EDUCATION; 4) ALL PROGRAMS, INCLUDING EXTRA CURRICULAR AND TRANSPORTATION, WILL BE RE-EVALUATED FOR POSSIBLE ELIMINATION OR DOWNSIZING.**” **business card handout paid for by the “It’s Worth It” Committee, Bill Jenks & Karen Daily-Treasurers.**

TruthOnly the board has the authority to make those policy decisions not the campaign committee or Superintendent Ewing, who has repeatedly threatened a “reduction” of 30 CLASSROOM TEACHERS in public meetings and in interviews. His message there will be punishment if the levy fails. If their claims are true, can’t the pay issue stand on its own merits? Why are threats necessary? We suggest the board show some leadership by first sacrificing their bi-monthly catered dinners. They might trim a little from any of the following expenses in this year’s budget and other management fat before they carry out threats to “downsize” teachers, transportation or eliminate extracurricular activities

CENTRAL OFFICE ADMIN\$643,396 + Admin. Building Operation and Maintenance - \$58,028 + Board of Education Services - \$68,650. The total salaries and overhead for these three items is **\$770,074**.

DESE received **\$750,000** for “Customized Training Projects Form 1995-96” for RTI (Can any board member explain why WE are paying the state that much for forms for RTI?)

TRAVEL (Travel budgets of \$1,000 or less were **not** included.)

Central Office Administration travel is **\$15,000**. Board of Education travel is **\$6,000**. Student Software Services **\$5,000**; Accounting **\$3,000**; Parents As Teachers **\$7,500**; Technology Services **\$5,500**; Professional Develop. **\$73,000**; Prof. Dev. Special Ed. **\$6,000**; Prof. Development Support Staff **\$4,000**; Eisenhower Math & Science **\$20,000**; Health Services **\$1,100**; Elementary. Counselors **\$1,500**; Early Childhood Special Ed. **\$1,750**; Preschool Instruction **\$2,000**; A+ Schools Cord. **\$1,200**; Practical Parenting **\$1,220**; Elem. Office of the Principal **\$2,400**; Elem. Instruction **\$1,500**; RTI Admin. **\$2,500**; High School/Learn. Center/RTI **\$6,000**; New Perspectives **\$3,000**; Vocational Consortium **\$9,000**; Adult/Community Ed. **\$1,500**; Respiratory Therapy **\$4,000**; Surgical Tech. **\$3,500**; Radiography **\$4,500**; LPN **\$3,250**; Adult Basic Ed. **\$4,000**; H.S. Activities **\$2,000**.

Total of the above travel budgets is **\$200,920**. With this much travel they need a full-time cruise director.

9. Quote "IT HAS BEEN 14 YEARS SINCE ROLLA INCREASED ITS SCHOOL OPERATING LEVY."-
Several Committee handouts and ads.

Truth A fact, but they are trying to imply that the school is not getting more local tax revenue now than 14 years ago, which is not a fact at all. In 1988, the district total assessed valuation was \$102 million, but by 2000 it had grown to \$194 million **a \$92 million increase!** Naturally the district is getting much more revenue from the steady growth in property values than they did 14 years ago, and they also get much more matching increase in state aid. Recently they have been using examples of smaller districts that have higher levies, more misleading "facts." A high levy in a poor area yields less revenue, not more.

10. Quote "(THE FIRST 40 CENTS) TO BE IMPLEMENTED IN FISCAL YEAR 2001-2002."
Official ballot language.

Truth This is sloppy work by L. J. Hart and Co., the school's bond counsel (who for some reason got to have the last word on the ballot wording). Taxes are paid on calendar years, not split fiscal years. Be warned that the tax will appear on your 2001 real estate and personal property tax bills, presumably for all 12 months of this year. Another retroactive tax?

11. Quote "Money In - Money Out" print ad shows a bar chart with amounts of each year's levy plus the state aid for that year. **RDN print ad, 3-21-01.**

Truth The amounts aren't ex-a-c-t-ly wrong; they are just designed to lead the casual or uninformed reader to the wrong conclusion. The chart and the figures make it look as if the amounts are NOT cumulative for each of the three years, which of course they are. For the second year the chart should show - not just the 20¢ to be added that year- but a total of 60¢. The bar for the third year should show the 80¢ final total for all three years and every year thereafter not just the second 20¢ tax added that year. This is as tricky as the "\$8.20 Per Month Gambit" or using "Big Mac" Math.

And it goes on and on

Note on the Channel 16 program We have been researching the claims of the school and the "It's Worth It" Committee for several months, long before the spectacular blow-up last Friday when School Board Member Bass, Charlotte Wiggins and Aaron Zalis backed out of their scheduled appearance on Channel 16. Bass, Wiggins, Ewing and Westbrook were outraged when people, as people have the right to do, began to question the campaign's "facts." Their threats and intimidation backfired when Channel 16 went on air and exposed their petulant demands and accusations of guerilla warfare by Channel 16. The show actually was much better without them because callers on both sides of the issue were able to exchange points of view and did so in a very civil manner without interference from the Spin Team. The program will be rebroadcast on Friday at 8 p.m. You don't want to miss this program as Program Director Steven Leonard recounts his confrontation with the Spin Team and the conceited offer by School Board member Annie Bass to buy the station.

The behavior of these four school "leaders" has discredited both the campaign and the school district. The ends never justify the means, and their marketing of this issue is, well.... misleading is the kindest thing we can say about the distortions, the threats and the legal and ethical campaign violations. Win or lose on April 3rd, the school system and the teachers have already lost. The mistake the proponents made was to view this election as merely a contest to separate voters from their money, like selling toilet paper. That attitude

disrespects the voters; selling voters short is something only amateurs do.

I encourage distribution of " No Standing News ". Please feel free to copy and distribute any issue.

Case in Point. There are two versions of tax calculators now circulating to tell you how passage of the 80¢ school tax increase will impact your tax bills. In the Committee's version they do the figures for you and the answer is low-balled by the month a point many people are missing. Their calculator also leaves out the fact that you will also pay the tax on all personal property. The other is NSN's **SmartVoter** calculator. Ours has both real estate AND personal property tax on it, and we let you do the figures yourself based upon both your tax bills. We think the difference in those two approaches says it all.

Smart Voter calculator and Rolla School District salaries can be found at
<<http://www.rollanet.org/~rwnash/SmartVoter.pdf>>

The NSN poll is also on that page if you want to vote and leave a comment.
<<http://www.rollanet.org/~rwnash/nsn.html>>

Decisions are made by those who show up!
SILENCE EQUALS CONSENT

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