

Benjamin SCHOOL DISTRICT 25

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Dear Benjamin District 25 Citizens and Staff,

During the tough economic times, I am sure that you are aware that the General Assembly is facing major issues with balancing its budget and paying its bills in a timely fashion. Unfortunately, as the legislature continues not to address its budget woes, the financial impact on Illinois school districts becomes more pronounced. According to *Crain's Chicago Business*, Illinois now has the dubious distinction of ranking first among the nation's 50 states in terms of indebtedness!

The situation is compounded by the creation of new programs approved by the General Assembly and signed by the governor without adequate funding. We now have more than 100 unfunded or underfunded mandates that have been imposed on school districts by the General Assembly. In addition, the legislature has expanded the problem by borrowing money from a budget area, such as pension funds, and not repaying it later. These practices contribute to Illinois' deteriorating financial situation.

The **net effect** for District 25 is as follows:

Fiscal Year 2009 (as of March 1, 2009)

- Average number of days delay in receiving state funding = 54
- Approximate amount in arrears = \$180,000

Fiscal Year 2010 (as of March 1, 2010)

- Average number of days delay in receiving state funding = 92
- Approximate amount in arrears = \$240,000

In addition, potential State reductions for Fiscal Year 2011 could be as follows:

- Elimination of General State Aid, Hold Harmless Supplement = \$142,000
- Elimination of Alternative General State Aid = \$334,000
- General State Aid foundation decrease of \$700 = \$30,000

This situation will not cease to exist. There is little indication from the General Assembly or the senior leadership in Springfield that they have any real idea of how to effectively solve this budget situation.

Local property taxpayers support 80% of the District's \$10.5 million annual budget. The State's contribution to our revenue should be \$1.1 million this year. Considering the tax dollars (income and sales) that this community sends to Springfield, it is shameful to be shorted even more.

Our board of education is committed to operate with a balanced budget. We believe it is fiscally responsible not to spend more than our revenue permits. During these tough financial times, the school board intends to protect the long term financial health of the District. To that end, in Fiscal Year 2009 and 2010 the School District reduced, through staff attrition, teacher and administrator staffing levels by 6.8%. Additional cost-saving measures are being analyzed and implemented and are listed on the district's website, www.bendist25.org.

Finally, we have made concerted efforts with local legislators to address our concerns and engage their support in helping us. They are acutely aware of our needs and those of other school districts. It appears, though that the issues which plague this state are a direct result of the actions, or lack thereof, the most senior leadership in the General Assembly and the governor.

If you would like to share your concerns about these financial issues, legislator contact information is provided below.

Sincerely,

Philip M. Ehrhardt, Ed.D.
Superintendent

State Representatives

The Honorable Randy Ramey
Representative-55th District
1883 North Neltnor Blvd
West Chicago IL 60185
Email: staterepramey55@aol.com

The Honorable Michael Madigan
Speaker of the House
300 Capitol Building
Springfield IL 62706
Email: mmadigan@hds.ilga.gov

State Senators

The Honorable John J. Millner
Senator-28th District
290 Springfield Drive, Ste 225
Bloomington IL 60108
Email: johnjmillner@aol.com

The Honorable John Cullerton
President of the Senate
327 Capitol Building
Springfield IL 62706
Email: john@senatorcullerton.com

State Governor

The Honorable Patrick Quinn
Office of the Governor
207 Statehouse
Springfield IL 62706
Phone: (217) 782-6830

U. S. Representatives

The Honorable Bill Foster
14th District of Illinois
27 North River Street
Batavia IL 60510
Email: foster.house.gov

The Honorable Peter Roskam
6th District of Illinois
150 S Bloomingdale Road, Ste 200
Bloomington IL 60108
Email: roskam.house.gov

U. S. Senators

The Honorable Richard Durbin
United States Senator
230 S Dearborn Street, Ste 3892
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Email: durbin.senate.gov/contact.cfm

The Honorable Roland Burris
United States Senator
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