

The Andalusia Star-News

School tax request denied

City board may pursue money in court

Published Tuesday, February 9, 2010

The Covington County Commission took no action Monday on a request made by Andalusia City Schools superintendent Beverly McNulty on behalf of her board that residents of the city of Andalusia pay an additional 3 mills in property taxes this year.

By law, county commissioners are required to determine property tax rates at their first meeting in February. McNulty asked the commission to include an additional 3 mills city officials believe should have been imposed following the passage of Amendment 2 in 2006. That amendment requires every system in the state to receive a minimum of 10 mills of unrestricted funds. When campaign literature was compiled by the state in support of the amendment in 2006, the department of education listed Andalusia among the “underfunded” systems which would benefit from the amendment’s passage. However, after the amendment passed, Andalusia was not included among the systems the departments listed to receive an increase.

The school system’s argument is that the amendment called for 10 mills of unrestricted money for education. While the city system receives the minimum, a portion of it is restricted to salaries.

County attorney Julie Moody said the Code of Alabama in Section 16-4-4 states the state superintendent of education “shall explain the true intent and meaning of the school laws and of the rules and regulations of the state Board of Education” and gives him the authority to “decide ... all controversies and disputes involving the proper administration of the public school system.”

She also cited a Public Affairs Research Council of Alabama (PARCA) opinion that the ad valorem taxes to be considered for the 10 mill minimum, ad valorem taxes available for school purposes will counting toward the 10 mills should include “instructional services, maintenance of buildings and grounds, capital construction and acquisition, debt payments, and any other purposes necessary for the operation of K-12 Alabama school systems.”

“I know the state department said Andalusia would receive thee more mills, but it doesn’t stand by that now,” she said. She said department officials also indicated they would “push back” if commissioners added the requested three mills.

Commissioner Bragg Carter said, “Nobody feels more stronger to help our schools and we’ve helped all of them. To me it’s not clear whether we should levy this tax on our people.”

Commissioner Carl Turman said, “I’ve been awake since 1 this morning staring into the dark, trying to figure out what to say and do. My first thought is to the children. I am for education.”

Turman said he resented statements made to the local media and quoted in this newspaper in which school officials said they didn't blame commissioners that they haven't received the additional money because the commissioners had done what the state superintendent recommended.

"I make my own decisions," he said.

"I stand with the other commissioners. I said when I was running for commission I wouldn't stand for any more tax," Turman said.

Previously, the city board of education has been advised to seek a declaratory judgment in court if the commission didn't assess the 3 mills this year. The board met Monday night, but took no steps in that direction.



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Comments

Posted by [biscuitsandhoovergravy](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 6:45 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Thank you commission for standing behind what you said when you were running for office. McAnulty and her greedy bunch will just have to do what the rest of us that dont feed from the public trough do everyday, and pull that belt a little tighter and make do with what they have.

Posted by [knos](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 6:58 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Awesome. Now the tax payers get to pay for some litigation.

It's good politics for the commissioners. They won't take any heat on this one.

How much longer will the superintendent have a job after this unpopular move?

Posted by [winkie](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 7:11 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Thank you. LOL, Good morning biscuitsandhoovergravy!!! I can remember having grits, eggs, bacon and biscuits at PHS in 1958. We were a poor school back in the day but we had devoted teacher's. Mr. Meeks, Mr. Clark, Coach Garner, Mrs Ina Garner.

Posted by [winkie](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 7:13 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

knos, aint that what we call, "PASSING THE BUCK?"

Posted by **knos (anonymous)** on February 9, 2010 at 7:20 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

It fits the meaning of the phrase.

I wonder how far up in the courts it'll get? Circuit court? Supreme court?

Bet it's going to be very expensive...

Posted by **LoyalAmerican (anonymous)** on February 9, 2010 at 8:31 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Round One goes to the people!

Posted by **localconservative (anonymous)** on February 9, 2010 at 9:18 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

I don't understand why everyone is so upset. This was voted on and passed in 2006. The only problem is that the tax was never collected. Do you all mean to tell me that if you live in a \$100,000 house, you cannot pay a mere \$30?

Posted by **biscuitsandhoovergravy (anonymous)** on February 9, 2010 at 9:31 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Localconservative, I cant speak for everyone else but my problem is not as much with the \$30 you mentioned but rather the millions we already pay and how it is spent.

Posted by **bluecollarguy (anonymous)** on February 9, 2010 at 9:52 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

I suggest everyone start studying their 'light bills' and your own checking accounts instead of trying to give the schools more money....The commissioners were right for now....these kids have it made better than ever and so do the teachers, now let's get back to the campaign and take notes for which of the commissiones will stay.....and school board members....

Posted by **LoyalAmerican (anonymous)** on February 9, 2010 at 11:27 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

biscuit: Your post does speak for me!

Posted by **kathystephens (anonymous)** on February 9, 2010 at 11:28 a.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

I am glad this tax didn't pass. I don't live in a \$100,00 home no where near that but it is paid for. I try not to live outside our means and they should to. All the people with power don't want cansinos or a lottery but they are all time hollowing they are broke. I am sick of it. When I was in school we got out and raised money. Sold stuff, had raffles, we had a fall festival where \$1000s were raised for the school. Now they want everything handed to them or the parents end up picking up the tab. Our band and the band boosters raised money to buy our second uniforms. The first uniforms were made in the home ech. department by the parents who could sew or anyone who wished to help. I guess those were the good ole

days where people helped themselves and each other instead of depending on the government. That is my opinion.

Posted by **noonecares** (**anonymous**) on February 9, 2010 at 11:32 a.m. (**Suggest removal**)

The county will end up collecting this tax in the end...but will cost all of us alot more due to legal rambling. I do not mind paying a little extra.

Posted by **LoyalAmerican** (**anonymous**) on February 9, 2010 at 11:57 a.m. (**Suggest removal**)

kathystephens: And a fine opinion indeed!

Posted by **andyalabama** (**anonymous**) on February 9, 2010 at 1:55 p.m. (**Suggest removal**)

Let's get a reality check here- this is NOT our school administrators' fault, nor is it our local politicians' fault. However, they are both stuck with the funding issue because they are reachable, close-at-hand, and they are close to the people most effected by the problem: our children.

So why are we constantly trying to scrape up the funding for schools? It's very simple, and I'm writing a book on it.

Politics. Politicians. They are killing our public education system, and have been for over four decades. The most despicable problems stem from the federal government, and surprisingly, from all three branches.

It all started in the 1950's and 1960's, when groups spearheaded by academia brought the case of the underserved students (either from race, socioeconomic, ethnic, or educational-impairment issues) to the courts. The courts agreed: we were failing to equally educate these children.

Then, through legislation enacted by the congress and policies implemented through the executive branch, an avalanche of school reform came down from the top. While there were major steps taken during the LBJ administration, even more aggressive and far-reaching reforms were put forth by Nixon's. Yes, EVERYONE helped make the mess, no matter the party.

Posted by **andyalabama** (**anonymous**) on February 9, 2010 at 1:55 p.m. (**Suggest removal**)

But these were good ideas, right? Yes, of course we want the best, fairest education system in the world (or at least better than the Commies). The problems with all these reforms became abundantly clear in the 1970's, however: these extra measures that are now required by law (under threat of loosing all funds) were not accompanied by legislation providing enough additional funds to make them happen.

So, in effect, they told schools to hire more special education teachers, testing specialists, and handicap aides- but provided only a fraction of the money needed fund them, and did not require states to fund them either. So they passed the buck on funding. States for the most part didn't follow suit on funding

either, because politicians find it very hard to enact tax increases to pay for additional personnel, even if it is required. Adding special ed teachers, after all, won't get you votes- building new schools and football stadiums do.

Passing "school reforms" gets you votes. Not that these things aren't good- no, they are necessary- BUT THEY ARE NOT FREE. And so the squeeze on public schools began. As the years went by, politicians in search of votes and public support continued to pass "reforms." These ideas had good intentions: reforms to aid the handicapped, those who can't speak English, equal access to sports for girls, better school lunch nutrition- but each initiative cost money, and enough money was not provided.

Posted by [andyalabama](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 1:56 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Every administration since 1965: LBJ, Nixon, Ford, Carter, Reagan, Bush, Clinton and Obama – have all participated in this. Then there was the mother lode of all unfunded mandates: No Child Left Behind. Here we went again with great intentions and ways to help our children and not enough dough to pay for them. Academia will say how necessary the reforms are, but won't figure out how to fund them. Politicians hid behind demands for accountability- but more testing costs more money, and an ever-larger percentage of learning time for our kids has been diverted to standardized testing. Most middle school students now spend over four weeks taking standardized tests. That doesn't sound right, does it?

Then there are the grants. These are the pork-like funding packages that politicians tout as improved education funding (many times just for their own constituents). They are actually earmarked funding bills for popular items like fancy computerized whiteboards and flat-screen TVs, special initiatives, special presentations and special, one-year funded staff positions: while schools struggle just to pay the light bills.

Posted by [andyalabama](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 1:57 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Every penny spent on education is great. It's for our kids! But even those funds turn the public against the schools when they only allow principals to buy what is specified. Then local folks are outraged because some school has a grant-funded video wall and not enough math books to go around. Sound ridiculous to you? It is- and teachers, principals and school system administrators pull their hair out every day in disgust at the injustice of political pandering.

The next time you claim that schools are wasting money, check out where those funds came from before you blame our local schools. They are forced to scramble for every dime, and local politicians dare not cough up a tax dime or people will point fingers and call them socialists. Then the same people are criticized for not helping fund schools- so our kids have become political pawns of partisans.

I also know that many people think teachers are overpaid. In fact, when adjusted for inflation, average teachers' salaries have fallen behind inflation over the last 15 years- so in reality teachers are making less. Oh, and since this is Alabama, our teacher pay is far below average.

<http://teacherportal.com/teacher-salarie...> (look at average salary, not starting, where Alabama is at least mid-pack). Then compare that to other degree-holding professions in salary or benefits- HA! And

remember- teachers are only paid for nine month's work, and have it spread over the twelve months in pay. As we say in Alabama, the overpaid teacher notion- that dog won't hunt.

My point is that everyone locally is playing the hand they are dealt- and doing the best they can to bluff and not fold while holding a pair of tens, ace-high. Try to imagine being in their shoes before spouting off some overused loud-mouth rhetoric on either side, and for once, keep our children the focus of what we work for. I can guarantee that is what our teachers do every day.

andyalabama@gmail.com

Posted by [localconservative](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 3:47 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Andyalabama, well said. It is a shame that people are complaining about school systems needing to "tighten their belts", when everything within that system's control, short of giving out pink slips, has been done to cut costs. Now there will be teachers who lose their jobs which will result in a higher student-teacher ratio. These same people who are complaining about paying additional taxes will go whining to the administration saying there are too many other students in the room for their child/grandchild to get the help they need. In short: the children will be the ones suffering. Therefore, I support paying additional taxes for our schools, and believe me, I already pay more than my share.

Posted by [pingbalata](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 3:51 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

There are kids in Red Level School today that are watching new flat wide screen televisions while they sit in a cold class room because the school says they cannot afford to buy a part to fix the heating system. It is not about how many funds, it is about how those funds are used.

Posted by [andyalabama](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 4:09 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Pingbalata, did you not read my post? Those flat screen tv's were purchased with grant funding that was earmarked by politicians so that it could ONLY be used to buy flatscreen tv's. Stupid, yes. Our school's fault? NO

Posted by [spifsmom](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 4:09 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Thank you, andyalabama!!! If I may add to the point you made on teacher salaries, I have a few pieces of evidence to support your argument.

First of all, I am at school from 7 a.m until 3:30 p.m. (on days I decide to go home, not because there is no more work to be done). I have a planning time, which I use to prepare for class; however, the 96-minute planning time is not enough to write lessons, grade papers, enter the grades into the system, make copies, have weekly department meetings, answer administrative email, etc.

Planning lessons requires ensuring I meet the Course of Study objectives for my subject area, which must be included in my written lesson plans. Many days I am at work until 4:30 or 5 p.m. I teach, have a short preparation period (during which time I am often asked to watch a few students for various reasons), spend hours grading papers...yes, it takes hours to grade nearly 100 papers for a single day's

assignments. I take papers home to grade, I write lessons at home, as well as read over the next day's assignment to ensure I am knowledgeable and prepared to teach the children. On weekends, I write the next week's lesson plans. Please note, that I only write the week's plans, there is still preparation that is done during the week for each day's lesson.

On days students do not go to school, we often have Inservice meetings, meaning a day of listening to State guidelines, school system progress and shortfalls, and ways we must implement new teaching methods thought up by some talking head at the State Board of Education. During summer, I either teach summer school, or attend workshops that will enable me to renew my teaching certificate. (Right now, I must earn 300 hours of professional development time to renew my certificate.) All of these professional development programs are paid for by me, unlike a private business, where employees are either reimbursed by the company, or the company pays for it then sends the employee.

Posted by **spifsmom (anonymous)** on February 9, 2010 at 4:11 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

I pay for my own teaching supplies which include file folders, classroom folders for students, stapler, staples, paperclips, tape, tape dispenser, pens, pencils, calculator for grades, markers, highlighters, copy paper (only 3 boxes of copy paper supplied by the school system every other year), sticky note pads, posters relevant to my subject area to make my classroom more inviting to students, and school supplies for the several students whose parents either cannot or will not buy the supplies for their children.

I am expected to, and willingly, attend after school activities my students are involved in so I can build a relationship with my students and, hopefully, their families to hopefully enable students to be successful.

When I teach, I must teach to standardized tests to ensure Annual Yearly Progress of the school so we do not fall into the dreaded "School Improvement" category. Not only must I teach so students will pass and score well on these standardized tests, I must teach the regular curriculum as well.

During any given class period, I must manage the behavior of attention-seeking students, be on guard for bullies, be aware of potential victims of abuse, watch for cell phone use (texting), note-passing, students who are unwilling to learn so they decide to put their heads down, and make the students interested in what is being taught.

I must teach all Course of Study objectives in spite of constant interruptions from various announcements over the PA system, assemblies that take away class time, and many other interruptions too numerous to list. I must teach students with unbelievably smart mouths with parents who do not care and often blame me for their child's failing grade. The State and parents believe I am responsible for all of the students' education. I cannot force a child to do homework, to study for a test, to not get suspended or put into in-school suspension. When is the student responsible for his/her own learning? Never. At least, not in the present day.

Posted by **spifsmom (anonymous)** on February 9, 2010 at 4:13 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

How much should I be paid for working 8-10 hour days during the week, several hours on weekends, putting in time to build relationships outside of the classroom, buying my own "office supplies," teaching advanced learners and special needs children in one classroom, contacting parents outside of school hours, paying for my own professional hours to be better at my job, attending these professional

development courses without being reimbursed for travel, lodging and the expense of the course itself? Some say teachers "have all that time off." When? When am I not thinking of my students? When am I not stressing over failing students, or how to improve a lesson so students will be excited about learning and WANT to continue their education after high school? When, even during a scheduled break, am I not trying to catch up or get ahead for when school is back in session?

Base pay is \$36,000/year with a bachelor's degree. That pay is only increased \$4,000 with an advanced degree. Tell me what other profession pays so little and demands so much from a college-educated professional. Please. (Aside from other public servants such as law enforcement officers.)

I love my job. I love each kid I teach. Everything andyabama stated about the government's involvement and crazy way of managing education is correct. I am not complaining about my pay or job, I am complaining about NCLB, the mandated testing, the hoops I have to jump through to keep my job even though I am giving all that I have and then some. I am complaining about people who think teachers have it made because we "get all that time off" and think we are either overpaid or paid enough. On a side note: tenure is about job security. Tenure is about not being able to be fired because I disagree with the principal or superintendent. Bad teachers can and should be fired; it is possible.

Administrators, to me, are just too lazy to do the required paperwork necessary to rid the system of bad teachers.

Thank you for allowing me to share my thoughts.

Posted by [purelogic](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 4:15 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

andyabama,

You never quite know what the heck you are talking about until you've been there, and from your "book" it sounds like you've been there. Thanks for writing and informing about the view from the other side.

No Child Left Behind maybe true, but if every child waits on the ones left behind, it's kind of like they all get left behind! I think this was one silly piece of junk that rolled down the hill.

Appreciate what you said, and I believe much of it's true. By the way though, in 5 card draw a pair of tens Ace high is a pretty good hand!

Posted by [andyabama](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 4:41 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Oops i meant a pair of two's. They would be so lucky to get tens.

Posted by [andyabama](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 4:52 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Pardon the gambling reference. I don't need any Troopers at my house :)

Posted by [LoyalAmerican](#) ([anonymous](#)) on February 9, 2010 at 7:22 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

spifsmom: Thank you for all you do. Thank you for signing up to do one of the most important jobs known to mankind. Thank you for loving and caring about our children. Thank you for doing all these

things for such a meager wage. It is indeed an upside down world when an athlete makes millions and a teacher makes less than \$50K per year. Granted, no one goes into teaching for the money, but they should be paid well! The great teachers are the selfless ones, such as yourself, always going the extra mile. Again Thank You, Thank You!

Posted by [dhartley004](#) (anonymous) on February 9, 2010 at 8:11 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

One day when these old school ,old brains die out Alabama will have a education lottery.But in the mean time we need to stop pissing the money the schools have on flat screen T.V.s.

Posted by [elwood](#) (anonymous) on February 9, 2010 at 9:37 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

as bad as it is..."we" have never had it any better n this!
ever hear of anyone wanting to leave??
nahhhh

Posted by [Naviddousel](#) (anonymous) on February 9, 2010 at 10:49 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

AndyAlabama makes excellent points in his coverage of education. One way to look at education in this state is to look back to 1900. AL. had done little since Reconstruction to fund schools. In fact, there were roll backs to limit school funding. As the 1900s came, many Southern states realized that to compete, education was the key. However, how to compete when a state didn't want to pay extra taxes for schools?

The 1854 Meek bill that set up a structure for education that put our state in the forefront but little took place due to the War in 1861-5. By 1900, AL is in its usual place in the rear. Following other Southern states push for education our leaders searched for funds. There were minimal tax increases in some locations that paid for school expansion but most places resisted. Black education was an answer.

Our state took funds from Black education and funneled it to white schools. Black schools were left to scrape together meager funds from their community, or later Rosenwald helped build schools. (Rosenwald quit in the late 20s when they realized that the state was never going to fund Black schools while someone else paid.) However, the funds were never adequate. A pattern that remains today.

Think of a building two houses but there is not enough funds to build a basic framework for one: that is the foundation of our school system. We look back with nostalgia on by-gone days when kids learned and no trouble occurred, days that never really existed. From the early 1900s we have struggled with high illiteracy, high dropout rates, and poor local and state support.

Kids that stay in school today and cause problems or require extra help in some way were out by @ 6th grade. There were job outlets for those who wanted out. Most kids till the 40s or 50s went 6-7 months in schools poorly heated and lighted, taught by teachers often barely able to function. Rural schools were much worse than urban, black much worse than white.

However, most people fondly remember schools, until things changed. The major change was integration. Now people bemoan the federal control, loss of local initiative, but mainly they dislike that someone told them their way didn't work. Education has never been better than what it is today. Most kids graduate, go to college, can read and write. Kids don't drop out at 12 and go to work. But somehow the obtrusive gov't has caused problems.

If a local system wants to control their system, pay for it. Don't ask wealthier communities in Alabama and wealthier states to fund the bulk of your community's education. The fact is that Alabama's education structure was built so poorly, we will always play catch-up to other places.

Posted by [andyalabama](#) (anonymous) on February 9, 2010 at 10:51 p.m. ([Suggest removal](#))

Things have to change at the federal level as well- those "flat screen" technology grants are federal funds. Every time a US Senator or Representative promises "more money to local schools, and more local control of funds," that gets pushed aside in the political process in order to fund pet projects in education.

Having pet projects with his or her name on them is great fodder for a politician's campaign. "I helped get blah blah blah for my state" they say. What they should say is:

"I'm such a looser politician that I'm willing to sacrifice the quality of education for the children of my state to help get myself re-elected."

Now, that would be profound honesty.

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