

### Vote 'No' on A Flaws must scuttle tax plan

The massive school finance reform constitutional amendment has too many serious flaws. Therefore we urge a "No" vote to Proposal A on the June 2 state ballot. Here's why.

Property tax cuts are too small. Proposal A was designed by legislators to benefit 70 percent and soak 30 percent, mostly the metropolitan suburbs.

While much of the state gets school operating rate cuts of 14 to 20 mills, the area served by Observer & Eccentric Newspapers gets little. The accompanying chart demonstrates the patry benefits to people who have been some of the hardest hit by property taxes.

A few suburban districts would be winners — Wayne-Westland 20 mills, Garden City 17.6, Redford Union 17.5. Others would benefit somewhat — Plymouth-Canton 14, South Redford 11, Clarenceville 14.4.

But the overall pattern is bad. Consider the home counties of the three chief legislative sponsors: Livingston gets cuts of 16 to 20 mills, St. Joseph 11 to 19 mills, and Hillsdale 14 to 20 mills. Those sponsors thought in terms of self interest. We suggest our readers do the same.

The tax shift would hurt many. Proposal A would raise sales and use taxes 50 percent. On balance, many, if not most, homeowners in suburban districts would pay more taxes. The harm is compounded by the lack of deductibility of the sales tax for federal income tax purposes.

Senior citizens would get little or no benefit. What little property tax cut they get would reduce their "circuit breaker" income tax rebates. And they'd be stuck with higher sales taxes besides.

Renters would pay higher sales taxes, but unknown is whether landlords would reduce rent to reflect lower property taxes. Renters have reason to doubt they would see any cut at all.

The assessment cap will be a public relations disaster in 10 years. Sure, assessments are capped at the rate of inflation or 5 percent. But when a property is sold, it's reassessed to half the market value. Neighbors with the same size homes will be paying radically different property tax bills due only to the fact that one family just moved in while the other has been there for some years.

Young couples, people with growing families, mobile people who seek new opportunities — these will all be punished by Proposal A. If those categories include you or your children, vote no.

City taxes shouldn't be overlooked. Property taxes to cities would be capped, and there's reason to fear their state aid will be cut. The result would be a blossoming of fees for every conceivable service.

Urban sprawl will be encouraged. Urban sprawl is the paving of greenfields for new business with no population growth to justify it, and the abandoning of existing streets and utilities.

Our suburbs get paltry property tax cuts. But Rural Macomb, Oakland and southwestern Wayne counties get big cuts. The effect would be to encourage developers to pave over greenfields with low school tax rates. That would hurt existing suburbs — a state-encouraged "scorched earth" policy.

Proposal A promises equity but fails to deliver. Without question, many rural districts need greater resources. But lawmakers have blindly failed to take account of the fact that the costs of living, building, renting, getting sick, insuring one's car and supporting municipalities vary widely across our varied state.

#### Proposal A: The Bottom Line

Arrows indicate an increase/decrease

- ▼ **Avondale:** 6 mills
- ▼ **Birmingham:** 0.67 (two-thirds of one mill)
- ▲ **Bloomfield Hills:** 0.53
- ▼ **Farmington:** 4.5 mills
- ▼ **Novi:** 2.2 mills
- ▼ **Rochester:** 8.3 mills
- ▼ **Southfield:** 7.8 mills
- ▼ **Troy:** 4 mills
- ▼ **Walled Lake:** 9 mills
- ▼ **West Bloomfield:** 7.1 mills
- ▼ **Livonia:** 5.8 mills
- ▼ **Crestwood:** (Dearborn Heights) 5.5 mills
- ▼ **Dearborn:** 1.7 mills
- ▼ **Northville:** 4.4 mills

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One simple example out of hundreds: Proposal A gives Englewood in the Upper Peninsula \$5,435 per pupil and Garden City \$6,227. Clearly, equality isn't equity.

The Legislature had other ideas before it which would have taken account of cost of living differences between the metropolis and the backwoods, but it turned its back on the good ideas.

There are other fishhooks in Proposal A. We suspect some of our districts will be harmed by the school aid bill implementing Proposal A which bases promised increases on past revenue rather than expenditure. The effect is to punish districts that kept tax rates low.

We still wonder if the state didn't shift more "categorical" costs to suburban schools than they'll have revenue to cover.

We're not happy to be opposing Proposal A. Property taxes are high in most places, and the state needs to help education more. But the slick political promises in Proposal A don't cover up its substantial flaws. And its most massive flaws won't show up until 10 or 20 years down the road.

Proposal A should be defeated June 2.



### LETTERS

#### A big thank you

Last November, the Farmington Observer printed an article about Gill Elementary PTA sponsoring a book drive to help elementary and middle schools in Florida that lost their media centers due to Hurricane Andrew.

We invited other school parent organizations in the area to participate and, with the help of your article, the response was terrific.

We collected 6,534 books thanks to the efforts of children, parents, teachers and administrators at Alameda, Beechview, Dunckel, Fairview, Flanders, Gill, Hillside, Power, Woodcreek and Wooddale. In addition, Scholastic Books, Inc. donated books to our effort.

When it came time to transport the books (44 boxes weighing more than 1,400 pounds), Northwest Airlines came forward and shipped them free of charge.

I want to thank all of you who sent in books or were involved in this project in any way. It's great to participate in a project that has children reaching out to other children and adults networking to accomplish a common goal.

I know that every time a child at those Florida schools picks up a book, there is joy and happiness in their heart because of you. Thanks for joining the drive and making it a success. Diana Chambers, Gill Elementary PTA

#### Thank you again

I wish to express my sincere thanks The Farmington Observer for helping to make our AARP Tax-Aide Program — Tax Counseling for the Elderly, a real success for another year.

We prepared 152 joint returns out of 755 separate interviews. Four hundred twenty-nine federal tax returns and 1,103 state tax returns and credit forms were prepared.

Tax related assistance was given to 138 clients. Sixteen senior citizens were given tax assistance at their residence due to ill health.

Again, thank you for placing the notices in the Farmington Observer, noting the time and place of tax assistance, each week during the tax season.

John J. Antonilli, local coordinator, Farmington-Farmington Hills Tax-Aide Program

#### Lions say thanks

The Farmington Area Lions wish to acknowledge and thank the people of the Farmington area for their financial support that was given during the recent White Cone Week, April 23 through May 2.

The main thrust of help is to the visually handicapped. It appears that the funds that we will expend this year for eye exams and glasses

will increase about 400 percent over the past year.

The need is evident and it is only through the support of the general public that we can help the children in need of assistance.

Our presence in the local shopping areas for the long week may have appeared to be overkill but we know the need was there and we as Lions felt that our time could be well spent to provide funds for those in need.

The Lions continue to collect used eyeglasses, our club recently forwarded 850 pairs for processing and use in the Third World countries and locations.

If you have eyeglasses to be donated the Farmington Library on 12 Mile Road has a collection box or you can call me at 476-6257 for a collection point that may be more available to you.

Again, we thank the general public for your support through the years and we pledge to work to warrant the continued trust of your financial support today and tomorrow.

Charles R. Carvell, secretary, Farmington Area Lions

#### A great letter

It was refreshing to read David York's letter (May 16) on student safety. He emphasized parental responsibility for children walking to a bus stop on main roads.

I'll add that there should be no return to curb service within subdivisions for school children whether or not "Robin Hood" funding is restored.

Taxpayer money is for quality of program, not family convenience or comfort. Lawrence Niblett, Farmington Hills

#### They're pleased

We have been extremely pleased with the service provided by Macomb-Oakland Regional Center (MORC) for our brother George since he was removed from Carr Regional Center and placed in a group home in Oakland County.

We consider it to be essential that this kind of a program be provided at a high quality level and have concern if "full management" is instituted.

Such a program should not be based on the easiest and cheapest method of service provisions. These people with tremendous needs deserve the best service possible.

We are asking that you investigate these questions intensively before destroying or weakening a system that is presently providing such important service to the community and our loved ones.

Dorothy Charlton, Susannah Melvin, Farmington Hills

### COMMUNITY VOICE

#### QUESTION:

What does Memorial Day mean to you?

We asked this question at the American House Retirement Residence in Farmington Hills.



'The birth of my two sons, I have twins, and they were born that weekend in 1943.'  
Sylvia Kantor  
Farmington Hills



'It's recalling all the nice things . . . and remembering those who can't be with you.'  
Jean Djevondorf  
Farmington Hills



'It means a holiday — and a nice one.'  
Hilda Mead  
Wilmington, Del.



'A wonderful day, remembrance of the past. Take the flag out and wave it.'  
Vito Balsamo  
Farmington Hills

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