

## AZALAS Statement on School Funding

There is much talk about continuing the current funding in support of public schools in Arizona, While not adequate, it is at least admitting that it is needed. Not continuing 301 funding would lead districts to further erode the needed curricular and extra curricular program that create a well rounded educated student and citizen! Any of the other options are better if school districts are given the discretion on using the funds where needed according to the districts. All agree that something has to be done to solve the funding problem. And, we do not want to wait for 2020 for only one shot at getting what is needed now! The sooner the better!

For too long, discussion of the funding for schools has taken place with but temporary solutions. We all know the facts about student access to learning with excellent teachers and proper support materials and comfortable classrooms. The reality of the recent efforts leaves us hopeful but skeptical that enough will be done to reverse the trend of the past 20 or so years. Several proposals have been voiced especially on the issue of renewal of Proposition 301. One proposal is to renew 301 as is. Another is to add to the current level by .4 cents to a total of 1 cent. Yet another is to add enough to bring the total to 1.5 cents. Our estimate is that neither will bring public school funding to the level of 2008. Today, public schools operate short by over 1.2 billion dollars from the 2008 level which, by the way, still ranked Arizona at the bottom of school funding nationally.

There is a suggestion that maybe a 1 cent excise tax on electricity produced could replace as much as 1.2 billion. One third of electricity generated is exported and we benefit nothing! All but a handful of states already use this vehicle on exports. In Texas as an example, an excise tax on gas and oil contributes millions into their education trust.

The most ambitious proposal is to end all exemptions to sales tax which would bring in an estimated almost 5 billion in revenue to the general fund and provide the needed revenue to deal with schools and other infrastructure needs. Yet other recent suggestions include stop or postpone business tax cuts.

A law suit brought about by the public school community challenging the state on facility funding is a sad note that exemplifies what cutting these funds to schools does to the safety of facilities our children are in! We have been here before!!

The expansion of “opportunity grants” which would “indirectly” give parents the option of taking public money to use for private and parochial schools will be on the ballot in November. These “voucher” will drastically erode needed resources for the almost one million students still in the public schools. The Arizona Constitution directly prohibits

the use of State funds for these purposes. AZALAS will support the challenge to this completely unwarented action.

The real solution is to bring about an understanding and agreement on why appropriate spending for Arizona's students is essential for the economy, socially and for simple benefit to the children of Arizona in the long run. Many people agree around these benefits already which is why we see these proposals.

AZALAS stands ready to support immediate solutions from our state leaders. If not forthcoming, AZALAS will work diligently with other public schools organizations in going to the voters of this state for the solution.