

Originally Published: 10/1/2012

## Board backs bills to end property tax

### 8-0 vote supports views of district activist organization

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After months of requests, Rich Martino finally got the response he was looking for.

The Amity Township resident and co-chairman of the Daniel Boone Taxpayers Activists rarely misses a Daniel Boone School Board meeting and rarely passes up an opportunity to speak against school property taxes.

He and friend Dave Pool have long supported the Property Tax Independence Act, represented by state House Bill 1776 and Senate Bill 1400.

Last week, the Daniel Boone School Board joined their ranks.

With an 8-0 vote, the school board passed a resolution in support of the bills. Board member Robert D. McLaughlin was absent.

The resolution acknowledges that the board doesn't believe there is a "Holy Grail" to property tax reform, but does feel these bills propose "a fair and more effective system for funding public education."

The bills call to replace the existing system of school property taxes with funds generated from an increase in state personal income tax and state sales and use tax.

According to Boone officials, the bills propose raising the sales tax to 7 percent from the current 6 percent, and personal wage tax to 4.07 percent from 3.07 percent.

However, the act also states that the property tax can only be eliminated in school districts once their debt is retired. Boone currently has about \$90 million in debt after taking on a huge construction project for its middle school and stadium a few years ago.

Through the proposed act, school districts would be guaranteed to receive their current level of funding, with an increase based on the consumer price index added each year.

Boone residents currently face one of the highest property tax rates in Berks County at 28.96 mils. The bill for a property assessed at \$100,000 is currently about \$2,896. The school board was able to pass the 2012-13 budget without raising the rate this summer.

The board's support came just in time for a trip Martino and Pool helped organize to Harrisburg as part of a Fill-A-Bus Tour to petition for the bills.

Martino said about 15 people from the Daniel Boone Taxpayers Activists joined the nearly 800 participants.

The group visited the offices of state Sen. John Rafferty and state Rep. David Maloney during the trip, but both were busy with meetings and voting sessions.

"All in all, I believe we got our point across and while I can't guarantee the bills will be voted on this short legislative session, the message was clearly sent to the legislators that, 'You will hear us in September or you will fear us in November,'" Martino said in an email.

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