

Dear Editor and Patrons of USD 467,

In last week's copy of the Leoti Standard is a copy of a resolution passed by the Board of Education at the July board meeting last week. The resolution gives the Board authority to raise the Supplemental General Fund budget, otherwise known as the Local Option Budget (LOB) from the current 30% to 33% of the budget. This year the board has the availability to raise the limit by passing the resolution; however, that does not mean that the district will automatically impose the 33% rate. As you may be aware, the district has, over the past several years, seen a reduction in available dollars to spend on educating the youth of Wichita County. For example, in the 2008-09 school year the General Fund Budget that we use to operate the school was \$3,737,800. This past two years, the district has been on a block grant funding formula and our General Fund budget was \$3,231,702; in that 9-year period the district has had to work with a loss of more than \$500,000. With that reduction we've lost some valuable people and programs that have been important to the success of our students.

We have also seen the valuation of the district go up over that time frame. That increase in valuation has helped keep the mill levy more stable and constant; we haven't seen the large swings up and down in the mill levy as some other districts in the state have experienced. We will see another increase in district valuation for this upcoming year and that is the reason the Board has chosen to pass the LOB increase resolution. It will allow the district to gain some much needed extra funding for our programs as state and federal government funding continues to be reduced. For the past five years the district has had only 2 administrators instead of having separate building principals and a superintendent. This has been a cost saving move, but, unfortunately, has not been the most effective way to assure the best possible education for the students. The extra funding could bring back the separate building principals which would help make the building function more efficiently.

The district settled the HVAC lawsuit this spring; while we were disappointed with the final outcome, it did allow us to make a large principle payment on the lease from Western State Bank. With this extra amount, in addition to our regular payment, the remaining balance is less than \$900,000; the original lease amount was more than \$2,160,000.

Please keep in mind, just because the Board has asked for the authorization to increase the cap, that doesn't automatically mean that's what will be levied now or in the future, it gives the district an option for extra help when we need it the most.

Thank you.

Educationally,

Keith M. Higgins, Superintendent/WCES Principal