

I Want to Pay More Taxes! by Steven Westhoff, Superintendent Reed City Area Public Schools

I'm hoping that this headline caught your attention, and, yes, it is true I do want to pay more taxes. The rest of this article is about the reasons why.

In this State, we're cutting everything, mostly jobs. We need more jobs, we need people to make money working so they can buy things and support the economy. If people have income, from new jobs, they can support businesses that can hire additional people and support the economy and our State.

Recently General Motors has cut jobs, Ford cut jobs, Reed City Area Public Schools cut jobs, other schools cut jobs, and the State cut jobs. How is this helping anything? Are all of these new people who are unemployed going to be able to help our economy and State? No!

We now have ads on the radio featuring stories about State Troopers who have saved all kinds of different folks in the past and are currently laid off from their jobs due to budget cuts. I'm tired of cutting jobs! I'm tired of making phone calls to families who are leaving the area to find out that the reason is "no jobs." I'm tired of working through the slow process of destroying public education in our State. I'm tired of State Legislators telling me that education is their top priority while telling me at the same time that they will take away \$125 per student from us this year (and maybe more) and then another \$500 per student next year. That's a loss of \$1,150,000 for Reed City schools before next school year. So, I want to pay more taxes.

If I pay more taxes, maybe we can invest in the future of this State and education. Let's increase the State Sales Tax to 8%; this will bring in roughly \$2 billion in additional revenue. Then we can hire back the State Troopers. We can increase the State Income Tax on a graduated basis, if you make more then you pay more. Maybe then we can create a bunch of jobs to fix our roads. We can get rid of the Michigan Business Tax, possibly the worst tax of all time. Then maybe businesses will come back to Michigan creating more jobs.

I know several of you are thinking that any additional tax is a crazy idea; we're already taxed too much. Well, that's not really true when you compare us to other States. We fall pretty much dead in the middle when it comes to income and sales tax. We're pretty much at the top when it comes to corporate taxes and unemployment taxes.

Without any change to our current budget structure in Michigan, schools will be devastated and the quality of education that your students receive will be significantly reduced during the next year. Our politicians aren't doing anything to change this situation, they will keep cutting funding and jobs but won't do a thing to increase the resources needed to provide quality education throughout the State.

I have a good job, I also pay a significant amount in taxes; however, if I end up paying more taxes and that results in more people getting jobs and more money for education, then I beg our legislators to increase taxes now. There are a lot of incredible families, kids, and businesses in our community. Many of them are out of work through no fault of their own. They want to

work, they want to stay in our community, they want their kids to have a good education; they want their politicians to be leaders! It's time for all of us to stand up and tell our Legislators what we want and then hold them accountable for their actions. People have always said that "you get what you pay for." I'm willing to pay for more people to have jobs and for quality education for our children.