

Dear Parents,

On February 2nd elections will be held in the state of Illinois to choose candidates for governor and other municipal offices. A number of school districts in the area are running referendum campaigns to increase revenues that will help their financial outlook. As you may recall, last spring your school district ran a similar campaign and lost. Although District 145's financial condition has not improved, in consideration of the current economic climate and hardships that many of our families are experiencing, your Board of Education/district decided not to seek a referendum in this election.

Regardless of last year's failed referendum, our district did accomplish two important goals that will be needed to help establish and maintain financial stability in the future. Our first goal was to pass legislation, specifically SB2051, which now requires the state to continue funding school districts that pass referendums at pre-referendum rates. Before our legislation, the state routinely reduced their contributions to districts where voters chose to provide additional funding for their schools, shifting even more of the burden to local taxpayers. We are proud to say that Bill 2051, which corrects this inequity, passed in both the Senate and House by a vote of 160 – 1.

Our second goal was to reduce our structural deficit approximately \$800,000 through expenditure cuts and revenue opportunities. Our district has reduced the 2009 – 2010 deficit approximately \$900,000 through staff reductions, salary / benefit package revisions, additional state revenue that will be received through the implementation of full-day kindergarten, and additional federal revenue from our new hot lunch program.

The undisputed fact remains that despite expenditure cuts and the successful passage of SB2051, our school district's annual deficit remains at approximately \$1.7 million for the 2010 school year. Contributing factors that prevent us from closing the gap further include; a CPI increase of 0.1%, continued unfunded mandates imposed at both the state and federal levels, reductions to and/or elimination of state grants, delays in state aid payments, and a freeze on the foundation level, which is the amount per pupil that the State contributes to school funding. Unfortunately, the desperate financial condition of the State may well result in reductions to school funding making it even more difficult for our district to maintain current programs. Further, for several months the State of Illinois redirected federal stimulus dollars (ARRA) designated to enhance educational programs in order to meet general state aid payment obligations.

Like many school districts, Arbor Park District 145 will need to address both known and potential revenue shortfalls in the immediate future. In addition, any other significant expenditure cuts will drastically change the services and programs our district currently provides. We continue to be creative and diligent in our efforts to provide a quality education to our students and be fiscally responsible to our community. We invite and encourage you to participate in an informational meeting on March 3rd at 7:00 p.m. in the Arbor Park Cafetorium where we will have a presentation regarding the District's financial condition and the status of State funding and programs. We hope that you will join us.