



Our View

Pottstown board takes the lead with Act 72 resolution

The Pottstown School Board is to be commended for taking a stand on Act 72, putting its name at the top of the list of school districts rejecting the tax reform act that relies on slot machine revenues to fund property tax reductions.

The board last week reviewed a three-page resolution on which it is expected to vote at the May 19 meeting.

The action came in the face of pressure from Gov. Ed Rendell to force school districts to accept the controversial legislation.

Pottstown has been at the forefront of those questioning the wisdom of the law since it was passed. Calling it "seriously defective legislation," the resolution written by school board member Robert Morgan describes the act as being "poorly drafted with extraordinary complexity, numerous contradictory, illogical and ambiguous provisions."

The resolution offers specific reasons for its stand against Act 72, including a statement that "the school district does not wish to encourage gambling," which "causes serious social problems, including insufficient family income, increased family debt and bankruptcies, family break-ups, suicides and crime."

The resolution also includes claims that, if enacted in Pottstown, Act 72 would have "an adverse impact on students through diminished quality of education," that it "fails to provide meaningful tax relief," particularly that it would "increase taxes for many individuals and will divide the community by creating winners and losers."

Those who rent their homes would see no financial benefit at all, only an increased income tax.

The resolution goes a step further than just rejecting Act 72, it also suggests steps the legislature and Rendell should take to remedy the problems of school funding in Pennsylvania: "cease imposing unfunded mandates;" "provide adequate funding for education by restoring the state share of the cost of education to historic levels of 50 percent or more;" "distribute such funding to all school districts using an equitable formula that meaning fully reflects the true cost of a quality education for all of Pennsylvania's children, including those living in low income areas;" and, "adopt simple and straightforward tax reform legislation."

Other districts have said they will not opt in to Act 72 and some have offered reasons why or suggested alternatives, but no district has articulated the problems with relying on gambling monies to fund schools or suggested solutions.

The resolution is not a cookie-cutter proposal as is often passed around among entities to be signed; it is a well-written and researched document that deserves the respect of every educator in Pennsylvania. Its position is right on the money.

Let's hope it gets the notice it deserves.