

EDITORIALS

'A' for tax action by school board

With their unanimous vote on a 3.4 percent tax increase on homeowners to bring in more money for public schools, members of the Jefferson County school board showed admirable leadership in tough economic and political times.

They deserve our thanks for their decisive and positive action.

Instead of temporizing or taking the easy way out, they stood up for education and did the right thing by students, teachers, administrators and the community at large with a vote that will bring in another \$17 million to Jefferson County Public Schools.

"We don't want to decrease the services to our schools," board Chairwoman Diane Porter told *Courier-Journal* reporter Antoinette Konz before last week's important vote. "The federal and state dollars continue to decrease. It doesn't give us a lot of options if we are truly committed to providing quality services to our children."

Given the board's action, the tax rate will rise from 67.7 cents to 70 cents per \$100 of assessed value for real estate and personal property. That means the owner of a home valued at \$100,000 will pay \$700 that will go to schools, \$23 more than last year.

The infusion is needed. Ms. Konz also reported that the district has seen a \$9.9 million re-

duction in state funding over the past two years, as well as a state reduction in per-pupil spending.

The biggest portions of the new money will go toward instruction (\$11.4 million), transportation (\$3.5 million) and plant maintenance (\$1.7 million).

The decision to raise taxes came as three board members are on their way out — Stephen Imhoff, Joe Hardesty and Larry Hujo are retiring — and a bumper crop of candidates is vying for the open seats.

Some residents said the outgoing members shouldn't have voted on the tax increase because they wouldn't be accountable for this action.

Poppycock.

Not voting would have been a cop-out — to their duties as board members and to their constituents. And voters should make it their business to ask everyone running for a board seat how they would have voted on the tax increase, and to justify their reasoning.

As Brent McKim, president of the Jefferson County Teachers Association, said in his support of the increase, "We must invest now in the education of our students or we will pay more later in taxes for incarceration, unemployment or other unfavorable outcomes."

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