

JULY 2008 HASA BRIEFS

Dear HASA members:

The following are two issues that you need to be informed about.

1. Florida's December ballot will have three amendments that will greatly effect, if they are approved by the voters, public school education in Florida for many years to come. HASA will be working with the Tampa Bay Area Coalition, FASA, the Hillsborough Advocates of Public Education (HAPE) and other educational groups to educate the public about these amendments. The following very informative article was written by Jim Warford, FASA's Executive Director.

On Monday this week, FASA President, Christi Moss joined State Senator Mike Haridopolos of Indialantic, Wayne Blanton, Executive Director of the School Boards Association, along with business, health care and civic organizations in a news conference to announce beginning of a campaign to fight the "tax swap" amendment on Florida's ballot this November. Haridopolos is considered one of the Legislature's top budget experts and is in line to be Senate President in 2010-2012.

Monday's press conference called for a series of 10 public debates on Amendment 5 which was put on the ballot by the Tax and Budget Reform Commission. Amendment 5 would wipe out the required county property tax levy for schools resulting in the loss of \$9-\$10 billion dollars in school funding while directing future legislators to somehow make up the difference.

Senator Haridopolos said, "We consider this a simple bait-and-switch ... and under the guise of property tax relief we think in a lot of ways this is a wolf in sheep's clothing," Haridopolos said. "This plan would make politicians, two and a half to three years from now, figure out what to do. We've got enough problems in Florida, the last thing we need are self-made problems and we consider this to be nothing more than a Robin Hood in reverse."

FASA's position is that Amendment 5 will create a funding nightmare for Florida schools. It would require both multibillion-dollar tax increases and drastic cuts in state spending to make up the difference. Amendment 5 is a \$9-billion gamble for education. If it passes, we will go from what is already a terrible funding situation to a true disaster for Florida's children.

Former Senate President John McKay, said former House Speaker Allen Bense might join with him in debating Haridopolos and other opponents of the amendment. Bense chaired the Tax and Budget Reform Commission, which put the amendment on the ballot. McKay said he thought the amendment has an "excellent" chance of passing in November. "I think our chances are quite good," said McKay.

When combined with the Taxation and Budget Commission's proposed Amendment's 7 and 9, these three changes our state's constitution do nothing less than drive a stake in the heart of Florida's public schools. The clear intent of

these three amendments is to reduce public school funding while at the same time send public tax dollars to private religious schools.

To get more information about the Taxation and Budget Commission or to read the exact wording of Amendment's 5, 7 and 9, go to:

<http://election.dos.state.fl.us/initiatives/initiativelist.asp?year=2008>.

November's election is shaping up to be one of truly historic importance at both the national and state level. There is certain to be a record turnout. For Florida school leaders the issues have never been more important. Please don't vote away your public schools.

2. At HASA's urging, on June 10, 2008, Superintendent MaryEllen Elia recommended and the School Board approved the adoption of an Alternative Certification Program for all school district administrators, supervisors, and managers. This program will be administered by Mr. Chuck Fleming the Director of Staff Development. The following are some preliminary points of information which will be further developed as the program is implemented during the 2008 – 2009 school year.

- A pilot program will be announced and a couple of courses will be available for the Fall of 2008 – 09.
- Prior to the beginning of the 2008 – 09 school year, an announcement in the Administrative Bulletin will state the particulars on how to sign up for the series of courses.
- Mr. Chuck Fleming, the Director of Staff development, will serve as the point of contact regarding questions or information.
- District level administrators, supervisors, and managers interested in taking advantage of the alternative route in lieu of a degree in Educational Leadership should contact Sally Colhouer in the Staff Development Office and complete a Letter of Intent prior to September 1, 2008.