

# Edwardsville Superintendent discusses district's need for funding

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer  
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**EDWARDSVILLE** - Voters in the **Edwardsville School District** may see the return of **Proposition E** on their April 2017 ballots, assuming the **Edwardsville Board of Education** passes a resolution to do so.

Proposition E would increase the maximum annual tax rate of the district to 2.70 percent of the taxable property of the district at the equalized assessed value (EAV). This would be an increase from the district's current maximum taxing rate of 2.15 percent. The

measure was voted down in November by a margin of approximately 1,100 against. **Edwardsville Superintendent Lynda Andre** said as many as 28,000 people cast their votes on the issue, resulting in a margin of just over one percent declining the resolution.

According to a fact sheet from the **Madison County Clerk's** office, passing the resolution would increase the district's approximate amount of taxes extendable for educational purposes from \$27,083,835.11 to \$34,012,258.05. The most recently approved budget of the Edwardsville School District is \$72,482,368. If the resolution were to be passed, that budget may increase to \$79,410,790.94.

Andre said such a resolution would be required by the taxpayers and voters of the district to ensure children continued receiving a quality education with updated learning material, current technology and reasonable class sizes. She said the district's financial woes have garnered the attention of the state, which has placed the district on its **Financial Watch List**. Edwardsville School District's education fund deficit and continued funding issues earned it a certification of financial difficulty. Andre said the State of Illinois has given the district until June 2019 to improve its situation. If it cannot make enough cuts and gain enough revenue by that point, Andre said the state may possibly take control of the district's financial autonomy.

"That is something that could possibly happen in the future if we cannot increase revenue or cut expenditures," she said. "Several districts are having this problem. I have no idea how or when the state might make an oversight panel, but we have been given until June 2019 to avoid that. We cannot speak on how that decision could be made and what would happen if it did. The passing of Proposition E is all part of our strategy to correct the issues."

Between February 2016 and the November vote, Andre said representatives from the district hosted as many as 80 public meetings to express the need for Proposition E to pass. She presented a detailed slide presentation at the November meeting of the Edwardsville Board of Education as well to demonstrate what sacrifices the school would need to make if the proposition could not be passed in April, including decreased student access to technology, the inability to replace aging security systems and larger class sizes. She said she could not speculate the reasons voters chose to decline the November measure.

State funding is the root of the district's issue, Andre said. Currently, the district is owed as much as \$1.3 million by the state from the 2015-16 fiscal year and more than \$1.4 million for the 2016-17 fiscal year. She said all districts in the area are suffering from the same problem. Unfortunately for the Edwardsville School District, they are not funded based on poverty because of a higher EAV than neighboring districts. Therefore, she said, state funding to her district has seen the greatest decline.

"If we could return to past funding levels, that would be one way to fix the issue," Andre said.

At the December 19 meeting of the Edwardsville Board of Education, the district's tax levy was lowered from \$4.22 to \$4.20 to properly reflect a small EAV growth of just under two percent. Because the levy was not a major increase, a public hearing was not required to pass it.