

Edwardsville Proposition E appears to have several strong supporters into Tuesday election

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville Superintendent Dr. Lynda Andre and staff have spent a considerable amount of time trying to educate and provide information to District 7 residents about the upcoming Proposition E vote.

Andre has also been open with her discussion about the 1 percent sales tax and what it will mean on the ballot. There have been community forums and administrators and others have even been going door to door in the community explaining and answering questions about Prop E.

Proposition E is a referendum on the Tuesday, April 4, ballot that would increase funding for local schools and increase the current District 7 tax rate from \$4.22 to \$4.77. The proposition is being placed on the ballot because the State of Illinois reduced its funding for District 7 annually and the district cannot maintain its programs and traditions of academic excellence at current funding level.

Proposition E will be used to replace aging textbooks, upgrade curricula, upgrade current operating debt and ensure District 7 does not lose local control to the state because of the financial instability.

District 7 has reduced operating expenses and depleted cash reserves, refinanced debt, issued working cash bonds, implemented salary freezes and eliminated 101 positions to try to work toward a level financial playing field and now Andre said, this is the last option before dramatic cuts and restructuring. With the passage, Dr. Andre sees the Edwardsville District 7 financial plight changing to a positive course for the future, plus programs and things that are needed in the schools will be able to be acquired.

The Edwardsville/Glen Carbon Realtors appear in overwhelming support of Proposition E passage in a survey done by Edglenotoday.com and Riverbender.com.

Rob Wigton, CEO of the Greater Gateway Association of Realtors, said from the organization's standpoint: "We believe strong schools increase property values. We think this is just a small investment for a future return. That is the conclusion our government affairs committee came up with. There is a tremendous school district in Edwardsville and that goes hand in hand with real estate values.

"If something isn't done, we will see the potential impact of losing teachers and programs and the state will take more control of our school. Our growth and demand here are both still good. Edwardsville and Glen Carbon are both such desirable places to live. We want this to be a great place to live and work."

Bev George, a long-time Realtor in the Edwardsville/Glen Carbon area, said, "We have a lot to lose if Prop E does not pass. We all need to get behind this and vote yes for our kids and our community."

During the November election, Prop E failed by a slight margin 14,468 to 13,388. Those who have rallied the support of Prop E know that every vote will count on Tuesday and are encouraging people to go out and cast their votes.

“We believe there is strong community support,” Andre said about Proposition E. "We feel we have gained many votes, not only parents, but people in the community without children in the district."

Karen Marcus, another well-known Realtor and Junior Service Club president in Edwardsville/Glen Carbon, said, "We want to be a sought-after district and area for housing, retail, restaurants, parks, etc. We have a lot to lose if Prop E does not get passed. We all need to get behind this for our kids and our community."

Tiffany Paschall, another successful Realtor in the Edwardsville/Glen Carbon market, said, "I have never met someone excited to pay more taxes, but this is an investment for people in the community, their home, their schools and their children.

"It is an investment in the future. I am not ready to explore what happens if it doesn't pass."

District 7 Proposed Referendum Budget Reductions for the 2017-18 School Year

The list of items below is a proposed list of programs and services that will be considered for reduction and/or elimination in 2017-18 if the April 4th referendum is not passed. If the referendum passes, these programs and services will be maintained.

Athletics and Extracurricular Activities - \$379,000

- Eliminate freshmen sports at Edwardsville High School
- Eliminate all middle school sports at Lincoln and Liberty
- Reduce extracurricular clubs at Liberty and Lincoln Middle Schools by 50%
- Reduce extracurricular clubs at Edwardsville High School by 50%
- Eliminate elementary Math Club at Woodland, Cassens, Worden, and Columbus Elementary Schools
- Performing Arts - \$260,000
- Eliminate 4th and 5th grade band
- Eliminate 4th and 5th grade orchestra
- Reduce EHS drama performances to one per year
- Reduce Lincoln and Liberty drama performances to one per year per school

Academics - \$205,000

- Reduce course offerings at Edwardsville High School
- Eliminate EHS summer school
- Eliminate EHS Writing Center
- Eliminate middle school and high school after school tutoring
- Eliminate elementary Challenge Program

Other Services - \$120,000

- Eliminate EHS Early Bird bus service
- Eliminate all K-12 field trips
- Eliminate middle school and high school after school activity bus service

Continued Impact of a Failed Referendum

- No updated textbooks
- No new student computers
- No building-wide WIFI access at Edwardsville High School, Lincoln or Liberty Middle Schools
- No updated school security cameras

Dr. Andre encouraged residents to take the time and vote on Tuesday if they haven't already participated in early voting.

"We want to give people one more chance to be able to vote what they want their school to be," Dr. Andre said.