



# **Taxpayers oppose \$9.5 million Backdoor Referendum planned for well funded Roxana School District**

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(February 17, 2014) A local resident and a member of the Madison County Board are speaking out against a decision by the Roxana School District to issue \$9.5 million in working cash bonds and are encouraging residents to attend the Bond Issue Notification Act (BINA) hearing at district offices “For the Roxana School District, or any unit of government, to burden the taxpayers with nearly \$10 million in unnecessary bond debt without voter approval is not only wrong, but also is contrary to the principles of democracy,” said Chris Slusser, a district resident and local taxpayer advocate.

Last August, the Roxana School District passed a resolution announcing its intention to issue \$9.5 million in working cash bonds. This type of bond measure utilizes Illinois’ notorious “backdoor” referendum procedure that allows a unit of government to borrow a substantial amount of money without voter approval. After passing the resolution to issue bonds, the public has only 30 days to circulate petitions to obtain hundreds of signatures to force a referendum at the next election. As no petitions were turned in before the 30 day deadline, the only remaining requirement before the debt can be taken is Thursday’s hearing.

Questions were also raised as to whether the school district needs to borrow the money at all. Although the resolution was passed over six months ago, the district is only now finalizing the process to borrow the funds. Also, the school district doubled its tax revenue from \$10 million in 2010 to over \$20 million in 2011 and has passed a tax levy of over \$20 million each year since.

“With over twice the amount of property tax money that it had just a few years ago and more money than it has ever had before, you have to wonder why the Roxana School

District needs to borrow any money at all,” Slusser said. “Also, the fact they waited over six months to borrow the money after first passing the resolution doesn’t suggest they need the money that badly, if at all.”

Madison County Board Member Mick Madison, who represents part of the school district, also believes it should reconsider its plan to take the bond debt. “I support allowing the voters of the Roxana School District to have an opportunity to vote on the new \$9.5 million bond debt,” said Madison County Board Member Mick Madison. “People are really tired of escalating property taxes and debt while their household incomes are stagnant.”

While the petition period has already passed, Slusser insists that it’s not too late. “They could pass a new resolution to restart the petition period and give us a fresh chance to get the signatures now that the school district is serious about taking the debt. But, unless they hear from the people at the hearing they’ll just borrow the money and move forward.”

The BINA hearing will take place at 6:00 p.m. on Thursday February 20, 2014 in the meeting room at the main district office located at 401 Chaffer Avenue, Roxana.