



PRESS RELEASE (7/10/06 – Updated 10/20/06)  
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## DAVE'S POSITION ON EDUCATION

I am running for State Representative of the 74<sup>th</sup> District of Michigan. As I speak with the residents of the district, many want to know where I stand on education in Michigan.

I am committed to education and to changing the current system that is failing to adequately prepare our children for the 21st century. More than ever before, improving education in Michigan requires close coordination between businesses and schools. It requires a commitment by parents, teachers, and unions to ensure that education dollars are spent in the most effective ways possible.

Proposal A was enacted in an attempt to level the playing field for low tax areas that were struggling to afford basic or standard costs of education (i.e. the Upper Peninsula). Recently, Governor Granholm raised the standard amount of state funds dispersed to schools per pupil. This allocation has reached to approximately \$7,350 per student.

Proposal A separates millage increases from the \$7,350 allotment. Millage increases can only be used for new buildings, infrastructure, maintenance of school facilities, etc. The \$7,350 per pupil must only be used for costs such as teachers pay, healthcare, benefits, and pensions. The current disparity among school districts is a result of certain areas taxing themselves higher than others through millages in anticipation of Proposal A enactment.

Presently, Michigan is one of the lowest ranking states for funneling resources into the classrooms. How can we get more education funding directly into the classroom and best utilize those funds to promote academics? How can we resolve this problem with limited tax revenues, a declining economy, and increased job losses? Our two options are either raising taxes or raising our level of efficiency. Most would agree that the second option is what we must do first.

- Michigan schools must return to basic academics.
- Parents must get involved in their children's education.
- Parents must know how and where education dollars are being spent.
- Administrators, teachers, and parents must have more flexibility in spending the school system's education funding.
- The school system must be held accountable for how they spend it.
- The state must adequately compensate teachers in order to retain talent and boost commitment.

One way to increase our teachers' salaries is by forcing MESSA (Michigan Education Special Services Association) to compete with other health insurance providers. Presently MESSA is an arm of the MEA (Michigan Education Association) and the uniserve directors receive bonuses based on the packages they negotiate. The Mackinac Center for Public Policy estimates that competition in the health insurance arena could save about \$400 million for Michigan. These savings could then be used to better compensate teachers without the loss of benefits.

Competition always brings costs down. We should not continue raising taxes in order to solve our education problems. Investing additional tax-payer dollars is not the right thing to do considering the current state of our economy. We must become more efficient first, not only in education, but other areas that will allow us to redirect funding to the schools. Parents, teachers, administrators, and unions must prioritize education and work collectively to promote a healthy and wealthy future for our children.

**Please contact me at:**

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**Dave Agema – “Common Sense Government at a Common Cents Cost.”**