

Ohio School Boards Association

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Record number of school issues on August special election ballot

COLUMBUS — In yet another sign of Ohio's worsening school funding crisis, voters will see a record 103 school tax issues on the Aug. 3 special election ballot, according to the Ohio Department of Education. That figure overwhelmingly tops the previous special election high of 70 in 1988, and is more than in the last four August elections combined.

"With 103 issues on the ballot, it's very clear that significant school funding issues continue," said John Brandt, executive director of the Ohio School Boards Association. "We've got a huge problem that isn't getting any better.

"Until the state fixes its unconstitutional funding system that relies too heavily on local property taxes, schools will have to constantly return to voters just to maintain current programs or minimize cuts. For schools whose levies fail, the outlook is especially grim."

Although the work of the Governor's Blue Ribbon Task Force on Financing Student Success continues, a solution to the school funding crisis remains elusive. And while the state touts the Ohio Lottery as a boon to public education, it finances only about 4% of the entire education budget — a fact that many voters are not aware of. Lottery officials recently announced that increased profits earned public schools \$10 million more than expected in fiscal year 2004. But, that provides just 3 cents more per day for each of Ohio's 1.8 million schoolchildren.

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Record number of school issues /2/2/2/2/2

“Public schools also are struggling with the additional financial demands of the No Child Left Behind Act,” Brandt said. “It’s extremely difficult for schools to meet NCLB student testing and accountability standards when they are forced to cut programs and staff due to the funding crisis.

“With neither the state nor federal government stepping up to meaningfully address these costs, the burden of these federal requirements is shifted to local property taxpayers.”

The Ohio School Boards Association is in its 49th year of service to public education and represents 100 percent of the state’s public school boards. OSBA’s services include: management consulting, continuing education through training programs and workshops, policy development, legal services, legislative initiatives, management services, superintendent and other executive searches, information, technology, employee relations and communications.