

As President Fiorillo wrote in the last month's Buzz, on the last day the Legislature met, they voted into law the largest expansion of the definition of "Basic Education" that's taken place in decades. Known as **HB 2261**, it also raised High School graduation requirements, will fund all day Kindergarten, merit pay for teachers, Preschool for at risk children. It is an achievement well worth celebrating and credit goes to the "Education Coalition" which includes the State PTA.

These reforms will be phased in, starting in the 2011-2012 school year and spread over 6 years because of logistics and cost, \$2 Billion dollars being the accepted estimate. The Legislature has promised that an identified tax source, that generates \$2 Billion dollars, will be in place to pay for the new law, come 2011.

The Legislature just cut \$800 million from schools and will have \$2 to \$3 Billion deficit in the next state budget. Economic studies show that our present tax structure is not capable of raising an additional two billion and maintain existing programs. These **facts** of fiscal constraint raise fundamental questions of how funding of HB 2261 will be accomplished. When individual Representatives were asked where the funding would come from, most answered "no comment" or "we're working on it".

Adding to this interesting mix is the pending Court case of *McCleary vs. Washington*. E.S.D. is one of the many coalition plaintiffs. We are asking Judge Heavey, if he finds for the plaintiffs, (us) he rule that:

The State shall determine the annual total cost of the new 'basic education' for a child today.

Identify the stable tax source to fully fund that cost for the states 1 million students.

Declare the present funding system for school "unconstitutional".

When you look at Judge Heavey's other court ruling in a very similar case, he ruled for the plaintiffs. If he so rules in *McCleary*, it would put tremendous pressure on the Legislature to step up and do the right thing, as they "promised". The case goes to trial this August.

Ken Bogle
Legislative Chair