

Dear Friends and Fellow Business Owners ...

I am writing to you personally with the hope that I can motivate you into action to Vote NO on the WISD millage on Tuesday November 3rd. The millage is irresponsible and unethical. At a time when Michigan's unemployment rate exceeds 15%, (the highest in the nation) and we have record foreclosures in Washtenaw County, we should not be raising taxes for struggling and hard working families. Particularly, when those who are responsible for running our schools are not willing to do the right thing!

The millage proposal is for TWO MILLS, which equates to more than a 10% increase. This is a very large millage and the other side is hoping you won't ask why.

The profits for our business in this county will not increase by more than 10%, and I will not have the option to approve 11.4% salary increases for our team members. I will, however, as a result of a millage increase have to cut 7 or 8 full time positions to make up for the tax impact that will arise from this millage alone. This is not something that I look forward to doing particularly when I am responsible for over 500 families in this county alone. This fact does not show up in the materials that the "Yes" folks are handing out to everyone.

I also take offense to the presentation that the millage increase is only \$200 to \$300 per year for home owners. Many of our employees reside outside of the City and this represents an increase to their family budgets that they can't afford at this time. This millage increase effort is completely disconnected from what's going on in today's Michigan, and certainly today's Washtenaw County.

McKinley has assisted over 200 families in the county through our Foreclosure Relief effort, and I am certain these families would have appreciated the \$200 to \$300 per year the proponents refer to as "nothing." It is "something" if you are on the edge and you may lose your home to foreclosure this week. For those of us who live in the City of Ann Arbor, the Millage will raise \$16 million per year, and only \$11 million stays in the city. Additionally, the 2 Mills are on top of the six millages aggregating 17.52 mills. As my friend Ted Annis said recently in response to the supporters theme "It takes a millage to educate a child," Ted correctly pointed out "It takes 6 millages and soon 7" if this millage passes.

Finally, we have 10 school districts in the county each with their own central office overhead. Only 59% of the money is going to instruction, the rest is going to central office overhead, operations, maintenance and transportation. If we defeat this millage, we will force the real conversation of how to run the "business" of schools in Washtenaw County better. We need to force the discussion to do better, and do what you and I have to do each day as business owners. If we are really committed to education as the key driver for job growth in our county, we need to bring the

dollars to the front lines. This is the real conversation to be had, and not just raising taxes without altering behavior.

Taxes will continue to be an issue in the county and this will drive away new business and reduce the financial impact of existing businesses if we do not take a stand. Under consideration is a millage for transportation, the County needs to figure out how to fund deficits, and the conversation underway in the City of Ann Arbor to have a city income tax is just a matter of time. We are not in a predictable economic environment in this County, and the cost of running a business is going up and up. We cannot and will not remain competitive if this is the track for our County.

TWO mills is TWO much! Ted Annis and his group have an excellent web page providing lots of facts so please visit www.A2CRSS.org.

Please join me in this fight. We need to take a stand as local business owners. Please call me or email me with questions. I appreciate you allowing me to access you via email on this most important topic.

These are my views and my views alone. If you are receiving this, it is because you are a friend. You may not share my views, and I respect that, however I do want you to know why I am so passionate on this topic. You have always known me to fight for our community and what I think is right!

Warmest Regards,

Albert M. Berriz