

February 2013

“Can I have some more money?” How many of you have heard that question before from your child? I'm sure that is why members of the state legislature have at times compared many of us in public service to the child that continues to ask for more money. We can come with doomsday predictions of a certain Armageddon if our endless requests are not met.

I had the recent opportunity to visit with our area legislators Reps. Murphey and Denney along with Sen. Griffin. They are true professionals who tirelessly give of their service to the taxpayers in our area. While we don't always agree on everything, the thoughtful discussions allow us to have meaningful dialogue about the mission of educating our children. I didn't act like the child asking for more money in that meeting but several points were made that I would like to share with you. I've said before that our district is growing and our enrollment numbers support the claim. Obviously, it takes more money to offer the same services to more people. During the 2008-09 school year, our average daily membership (enrollment) was 3253 students. Our early number for the 2012-13 is 3440 students. A school receives funding from the state based on an intricate formula where the services needed for each student are considered. This funding begins with a baseline dollar figure for each student in the state. In 2008-09 the baseline figure was \$3,159. Since 2008-09 the figure has gradually been reduced to \$2,726 for the 2011-12 school year (the final figure is not yet available for 2012-13). During this time, we have implemented many programs in Oklahoma aimed at holding school districts accountable for their work while attempting to accurately measure their efforts. A great number of these initiatives have not been fully funded by the legislature. The conclusion to be drawn is we are doing much more with less.

I have grown tired of the doomsday claims made by many of us in public service if we don't get what we want or need. I've also grown tired of the anecdotal claims made by grandstanding critics regarding frivolous spending of public funds. It is a simple fact that funding cuts usually lead to a reduction of services and not all people entrusted with public money are dishonest. Both tactics insult the intelligence of the public and only have a moderate short term effect on public opinion.

I'm encouraged by the pledge Governor Fallin made in her State of the State Address to fully fund mandates created by the legislature. For decades, educators have been requesting that principle to guide all reforms, but unfortunately it has often fallen on deaf ears regardless of which political party held the majority.

By the way if you missed the Guthrie FFA Pork Chop feed, you missed a great event. Having our students help you to your seat in a packed fairgrounds reminded me why I have a great job! It was so much fun to see Mayor Burtcher with a rather large pork chop hanging from his mouth...where is a camera phone when you need it? Also, congratulations to the Guthrie Education Foundation Board on their hard work putting on “An Evening with Ty England”. It was so great to see our band students playing with one of the most talented artists this state has to offer.