

# Chalkboard

By

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Gentry Public Schools

As you may have guessed, if you are a faithful reader, the *Chalk Board* has gone on summer vacation. For the past few years, the last article each school year has been my graduation address to the seniors. After forty or so articles each year by that time, most of my literary ability, which is miniscule at best, has vanished.

However, two important issues have prompted me to communicate with you now. The first is the fact that the Gentry School District will be holding a special school board election on July 8, 2003, to restructure our tax levy. I will not rehash all the reasons for the election beginning with the *Lakeview* lawsuit against the State of Arkansas and ending with an Arkansas Supreme Court ruling which stated that the use of excess debt service mills cannot be used to meet the 25 mill Uniform Tax Rate for all Arkansas public school districts.

I will explain that a YES vote on the millage question will not raise your local taxes. Nor will it extend the life of the debt. A YES vote will simply shift 2.9 Dedicated Operation and Maintenance mills and 6.2 Debt Service mills to and add to the existing 15.9 Maintenance and Operation mills. The net result will mean that Gentry's current millage rate of 35 mills will remain at 35 mills- 25 mills for Maintenance and Operation and 10 mills for Debt Service. It will mean that Gentry will become compliant with the required rate required by the court.

A NO vote would also leave the millage rate at 35 mills for a few months. But in November the Benton County Quorum Court would be required to force a mandatory raise of 6.2 mills for Maintenance and Operation. The new rate would then be 41.2 mills. Then Quorum Court members would not have a choice but would be required to do so by law.

Simply, but with a seeming paradox, a YES vote means that your school taxes remain the same. A NO vote will increase your tax rate by 6.2 mills.

In being your superintendent for 11 years I have worked diligently to earn your trust. I hope that, at least to some degree, that I have. There will come a time again someday in the future when the Gentry School Board will ask you for a millage increase to build a new elementary school or to add on to an existing building. When that time comes it is my desire that if you can

see the real need then you will pass the millage as you have done three times during my tenure here with you. It will be my wish that you pass it because you want to rather than feeling like you were forced to choose the lesser of two evils.

The second issue of importance is for any parent wanting to enroll their child at Gentry under the new Public School Choice Act. The deadline to do so is Tuesday, July 1, 2002. Law establishes the deadline so no exceptions will be possible. Forms are available at the Central Administration office Monday through Thursday from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. and until noon on Fridays.

I hope you have a great 4th of July.