

UNITY POINT SCHOOL DISTRICT #140

REFERENDUM 2014

...STRENGTHENING OUR COMMUNITY'S FUTURE...

WHY IS THE UNITY PONT SCHOOL DISTRICT HOLDING A REFERENDUM?

- State funding in critical areas of education has been cut by nearly 11% and is under attack to be reduced by as much as 15%---and in some areas it has been eliminated; areas of federal funding have also been reduced.
- Because State and federal funding has been reduced, the district has decreased the number of full time employees by 23 positions since the 2006-2007 school year; as student enrollment has remained consistent, the reductions to faculty and staff has created fluctuating class sizes with first grade classes reaching as high as 30 students in the current school year.
- Since the 2011-12 school year, Unity Point's main source of State funding has been reduced by \$801,824, while daily costs (i.e., paper and textbooks for classrooms, fuel for busses, utility costs, and mandated requirements on education) have risen. We could lose over \$400,000 in General State Aid next school year if the proration is reduced an additional 4% (89% - 85%).
- We have approximately 2 years left in reserves to sustain the current level of losses being experienced.
- The Unity Point School District has not increased taxes for district expenses since 2000. At that time, the bond referendum asked the community for its support in the building of an addition to our existing school. Those building bonds were paid off in March 2013. This represented 43 cents of the current tax rate for our District.
- With this current referendum we are requesting an increase in our limited tax rate of 50 cents. This 50 cent increase would generate approximately \$360,000 in additional revenues which will assist the District in dealing with the current fiscal crisis at both the State and federal levels.
- Maintaining a top notch school helps to maintain top notch housing values reflected in the Unity Point School district. Real estate data indicates that Unity Point homes are highly sought after, resulting in high sales values, as families want to be a part of our top notch educational district.

HOW MUCH WILL THE REFERENDUM COST TAXPAYERS?

- The referendum will ask taxpayers to approve an increase of 50 cents per \$100 of assessed property value.
- For a home with a market value of \$150,000, the cost to the homeowner will be an additional 50 cents, \$250 per year, or \$20.83 per month, as compared to the current tax bill payable in 2013.
- Should the referendum pass, Unity Point will continue to maintain the lowest tax rate for an elementary school district, in Jackson County, with a total rate of \$2.60471 (2012 Tax Year Payable in 2013); as compared to Carbondale #95 at \$3.58913, DeSoto #86 at \$4.39719, and Giant City #130 at \$3.00262.

FOR WHAT WILL THE REFERENDUM FUNDS BE USED?

- **Support for the Vital Programs.** Funds requested in the 2014 Operating Referendum will help maintain existing operations and educational programs, preserving the educational excellence our community has come to expect. Funds will support music and the arts, classroom technology, increased school safety measures, transportation (bussing students to and from school), after-school activities, IMSA courses, teacher mentoring and professional development for all teachers. IF the referendum is NOT PASSED, class room sizes will drastically increase and courses in art, music, P.E. and athletics may be areas for elimination or diminished instruction. Once we begin the process of diminished instruction, the quality of education will suffer greatly.
- **On-Going and Preventative Maintenance for District Facilities.** The District has always maintained an ongoing maintenance schedule for facilities to ensure the community's investment in our buildings is protected, minimizing the risk of more costly future repairs. Funding received from this referendum will help in maintaining effective classroom and learning environments, upgrading and maintaining school safety and security measures, upgrading and maintaining building infrastructure for technology, and completing repairs and renovations as necessary.

WHERE CAN I GET MORE INFORMATION?

- VISIT: www.up140.org and click on Referendum 2014.
- CALL: Dr. Lori James-Gross, Superintendent or Bill Laser, Accountant at 618-529-4151.
- EMAIL: ljgross@up140.org or blaser@up140.org

WHEN AND WHERE DO I VOTE?.....WHO CAN VOTE?

- Voting will take place on Tuesday, March 18, 2014 at regular polling locations from 6:00 AM to 7:00 PM. To register or for absentee voting, visit www.jacksoncounty-il.gov.
- Early voting will take place on March 4th, 6th, 11th, and 13th between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. at Carbondale City Hall.
- Early voting will also be available each business day between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 4:00 p.m. beginning February 6th through Election Day at the Office of the Jackson County Clerk/Recorder.
- To vote in the referendum you must be:
 1. A native born or naturalized citizen of the United States;
 2. At least 18 years old at the time of the election; and
 3. A resident of the Unity Point School District for at least 30 days prior to the election.