



## Fountain Lake's Millage Election and its Misdirections

### Description

The similarities between the upcoming February 8th special millage election and the 2007 attempt to increase the millage rate are striking. In 2007, the request was for 5.55 mills which was a 15.5% increase over the then-existing millage rate of 30.25 and was to be used to build a \$14 million high school.

The current request is for 5 mills (a 14.4% increase) which will be collected over 30 years and which if passed will be used to fund \$40 million in campus improvements.

Let's address some of the very basic misdirections being used in the attempt to sell this millage increase.

1. **Fountain Lake has the lowest millage rate of all districts in the area!** Although true, it is a misdirection because it ignores the following facts:
  - Fountain Lake's locally collected tax revenues place it 5th in the state of Arkansas at slightly over \$10,054 per student (in 2020-2021). What this means is the district does not qualify to receive state "foundation funding" which all other local districts receive, varying from \$2,563/student at HSSD to \$5,329/per student at CMS. Fountain Lake receives "\$0" such funds.
  - Local tax revenues constitute 90% of the total income of FL with the other local area districts such revenues being under 65% of their total revenues.
2. Although not a misdirection, the election campaign literature ignores the impending increase in local tax revenues that will result from the state mandated "property reappraisal process" which is underway in both counties that support Fountain Lake. Hard numbers for the reappraisals are not yet available but based on the substantial increases in home selling prices the last 2 years, there is little doubt increased reappraisals will be at least 10% thus increasing the current \$10,054 to over \$11,000 per student.
3. Another factor which is ignored by the election hype is the fact that some of the need for more revenue is self-inflicted by the Superintendent's electing to accept so many "school choice" students. He has virtually doubled the number of choice student during his tenure. Why is this important? The only revenue which is received by the district to support choice students is "categorical funds" which amount to approximately 9.5% of total revenues, hence accepting choice students' means spreading the local tax revenues over a larger population. Adding such

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students must be one of the key drivers for more class room space. One of the legitimate reasons for rejecting choice applicants is lack of space.

Please consider the above when deciding whether to support the 5 mill increase.

P.S. Had the district been reasonable by requesting 1-2 mills, I would have supported their request but 5 mills to too big a bite for me.

### 2020-2021 Revenues for Local School Districts

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By **Bob McCleskey**, member of Fountain Lake Board of Education 2007-2015

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