

## **We Need Your Help**

Whether you blame the legislature or the Governor you're probably sick and tired of hearing about the state budget. I know I am. Unfortunately, school board members don't get to tune out the Harrisburg hub-bub. While the folks in Harrisburg are still dancing around the issues holding up this year's budget, all 500 school districts across the state have begun the process of building their 2016-2017 budgets in earnest. Yes, we are building budgets for NEXT school year with no idea of what we will be receiving for the current year.

What we in Gettysburg do know going into 2016-2017's budget process is that the state legislature mandated contribution rate into the Public School Employees' Retirement System (PSERS) for 2016-2017 has increased another \$500,000 or xx% over the 2015-2016 contribution. We also know that the state is holding up processing of PLANCON forms. PLANCON is the legislature mandated process that the Pennsylvania Department of Education uses to track school construction projects and payments. GASD has not received \$331,021 in the current 2015-2016 budget. GASD also has not received \$616,040 from the 2014-2015 budget. Failure of the state to settle their PLANCON obligations could leave GASD nearly \$1,000,000 short through this fiscal year.

We know that these two items represent nearly \$1,500,000 dollars your school board and administration must either trim from the budget or raise through higher property taxes. As of the writing of this column, GASD has received about 45% of the funding received at this time last year. Might the legislature and Governor still pull through with a higher contribution for the schools for this budget year? Maybe. Unfortunately, we can't hook our budget to the "ifs and buts" coming from all sides in Harrisburg. As the saying goes: "If 'ifs and buts' were 'candy and nuts,' it would be Christmas everyday." The only thing Christmas 2015 brought us was continued budget heartache.

Many of the public school districts across Pennsylvania planned for Tax Revenue Anticipation Notes (TRAN). TRANs allow school districts to secure a line of credit to use IF they need it while waiting for funding to arrive. While a TRAN doesn't charge interest unless funds from the note are used, lending institutions do charge a fee for setting up a TRAN. Districts in Pennsylvania were responsible for arranging nearly \$1-Billion in TRANs. Some Districts have had to dip into their TRAN and/or seek an additional TRAN. GASD has been blessed in not needing to resort to a TRAN.

The full state budget is now over 230 days late. Your school board needs your help. We cannot accurately build a budget for 2016-2017 without knowing the funding commitments for 2015-2016. Regardless of your views on why the budget is late, please take the time to reach out to our local legislators and the Governor to ask that they work together to follow through with their constitutional obligation to complete this year's budget now and the 2016-2017 budget by June 30, 2016.

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