

March 18, 2018

Chairman Schaffer, Committee Members-

Thank you for allowing me to speak regarding HB 488. This bill will increase transparency regarding what levies represent in terms of \$ and Cents when they appear on our ballots.

I'm Marlene Johnson-a Christian and Political Activist from Miami Twp. Yellow Springs. We live on a small farm just outside the Village. There's something in the water- you either become active or you sink." I will soon be 82. It gets to be a bragging point when you reach 79.

We've been in Greene County since 1980. My Husband is retired Air Force-Viet Nam. So we've lived in a multiple locations and experienced a lot of varying property tax situations.

I know we are responsible as citizens to be knowledgeable about the actions of our elected officials. I have attended our Greene Co. Commissioner's meetings, regular and work mtgs., for the past 5 years. Since we don't go on vacations, I have been at more meetings than any one of the 3 commissioners. It's been a real education.

All the levies that appear on the County ballot are required to be passed by the Commissioners. "Passed Thru" is a better term, because they are required by the O.R.C. to allow levies by most taxing entities. Before they are presented to the Commissions, the levies have been certified by the County Auditor. H.B. 920 of the 111th General Assembly (1976) places certain parameters regarding interpretations that protect the property from excessive taxation. The Auditor determines these parameters have been met Our Commissioners do talk with the people who are presenting a levy at a work meeting. They often recommend a lower millage or shorter duration. But it is only a recommendation and is treated as such.

There are people in our county on fixed incomes who are being forced out of their homes due to the burden of the property taxes. It isn't any one levy, but the multiplicity of the levies. All the Sponsors have a "passion" for their project and want Max \$ for as long as possible. There is little concern for the people who are required, by law, to hand over cash. We don't own our property anymore, we're just renting from the Government. The problem is exacerbated as the funding for all these groups, Police, Fire Departments, Schools, Health Dept., Parks, Seniors, Developmentally Disabled, Children's Services, Greene Memorial Hospital, etc. all come from property owners.

A major portion of the land in Greene County is not taxed. We have State, County, City & Twp. Parks, at least 6 Universities, County, City & Twp. buildings, Schools & their properties, churches & their properties, business with tax abatements, non- profits etc., That leaves the people in all those little houses paying the piper- Which includes renters even though they don't seem to understand property tax is added to their rent payment. Oh, Yes, all the HUD housing is tax exempt.

Yellow Springs has never been known to turn down a levy. We have a 1% income tax in perpetuity for the School district. May 2, 2017 a Special Election added a 2.4 Mill tax for 30 year bonds for new buildings for the Miami Fire Dept. and a Tax Levy Renewal of 7.0 mills for 8 years to avoid an operating deficit for the Yellow Springs Schools. This May 8 Primary Ballot has is an Income Tax Levy .25% increase and 4.7 mills for 37 year bond issue to raise \$12,688,963 to build a new campus for the Yellow Springs Schools. This Fall there is to be a County levy to build a new campus for the Greene Vocational School. And this is a place that goes all out for "affordable housing." There is a disconnect.

Because of my age - born in 1936 - I am a product of the Depression- the real one. I was brought up on the stories my Father would tell. How neighbors would block the roads with their wagons and bodies when the Sheriff would come to deliver papers to take away a man's farm because he couldn't pay the taxes. And the time when Uncle Dan who had a big farm across the Wabash came by in his Model T. My folks were young marrieds and my Dad was working as a farm laborer. Uncle Dan asked if they had any cash. His taxes were due and he couldn't pay them. They did- it was under the floorboards. At that time, you did not put money in the banks.

So, I am of the mindset that anything you can do to make it clear in the ballot language when a levy is raising or lowering the amount of tax and by how much, it will help all of us who are being taxed to make an educated decision regarding if we can afford the levy. And that is what HB 488 will do. We will vote for the levies if there is a real need and if this is a Group we are supposed to fund. But when the Group is in the "Empire Building Mode" hopefully we can sayb "No."

Thank you for your time and consideration. Are there any questions?

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