

FINAL THOUGHTS ON THE PIONEER DISTRICT ATTEMPT

The attempt to create a new Pioneer School District was a learning experience. It got the issue into the news but was not successful. **For those attempting to create a new school district, there are several things I would do differently:**

Do not suppose that the battle for public opinion will begin after the study is complete and facts are available. District administrators will quietly team up with the union to sway the public's opinion, especially teachers, from the very first: before any facts are available. *You will probably need a mailer* to the general public while or soon after the signatures are gathered. At least one mailer is necessary to reach the public. Few will read the newspapers and, for the most part, *the media will not give you a thorough review of the subject.*

You will need to have finance people on the committee who can sort through the figures the district will give you. The district administrators will be as obstructionist as they can without appearing to be. They will try to make it look very expensive and show that both sides will lose funding, etc. Realize that they are the only ones whose jobs may be in jeopardy, and they will fight it behind the scenes. Union professionals will also attack it for they are somewhat at risk.

If you can elect a majority of board members who favor dividing the district, much of the rest will take care of itself. The board members can initiate the process themselves without the petition and they may be able to sort through the figures a little better. However this too is not easy (electing a majority).

In the study, *actual revenues need to be figured*, which didn't happen for us. They said it would be too complicated, though they do it every year for themselves. They merely calculated expenses with capital outlay and maintenance and operating costs combined and then said that taxes would have to be increased to meet those costs. RDA's were not included in the calculations either.

Separate within the study what costs will be for running the district (M&O) and what will be for building future buildings (Capital costs). Otherwise they will try to make it appear that new building costs will come out of money available for teacher salaries and benefits. *They will say that no teachers will want to work in the new district claiming that their salaries will go down.* These two funds cannot be mixed, at least in Utah, and so the same amount would be available for teachers that they currently have since it is funded on a per pupil basis.

If you can get a committee to hang together in taking the lead, it may help in getting criticism to focus on the issue rather than on the person leading the charge (many is better than one). Don't allow this to turn into a bash the leader affair.

Emphasize a different approach to current practice. Emphasize local patrons' and taxpayers' involvement in the governance (as opposed to involvement in the classroom) of the district. Show that local community councils really have little or no power and are mostly a "feel good" creation for the district to gain acceptance from the public of their agenda.

You may need to *start by helping the public understand* how bad big schools are and later help them see that big districts cannot keep school size down. As they grow, so will the size of their schools and, despite all attempts, they cannot avoid it. Politically it will happen.

Finally, I am available for advice. Email me through this website and I will connect up with you.

Rep. David N. Cox