

Why Greece pays high school taxes
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There is a tragedy evolving in Greece, caused by groups of people acting on false opinion, opinion not supported by fact.

Group 1, the social engineers in the State Education Department in Albany. Their conclusions about our demographic and fiscal condition are based on point values that nobody challenges. They have consistently calculated our state aid well below districts of comparable size.

As an example, in the 2003-04 school year, William Floyd District, with 10,619 students, received 9,878 per student; Sachem, with 14,873 students, 7,721 each; Middle Country, 11,579 students, 7,528; and Greece, with 13,722 students, received 5,846 per student.

At the William Floyd rate, Greece would have received 55 million more.

Group 2, mostly downstate board members, believes, "It costs more to live in those districts." That is pure nonsense.

Given only these property tax rates: Sachem, 13.56 per 1,000 valuation; Middle Country, 11.89; William Floyd, 14.04, Greece, 21.65; which district has the highest cost of living?

True, state aid is calculated differently for these other districts, but no one I talked to in Albany knows why.

Economically Greece and Sachem could be twins. Their 2003 per pupil income was 105,174, ours 96,591; their property value per pupil 269,006, ours 204,891. So one would think they should have received the same or less state aid than Greece. After all, the other two districts cited have lower wealth and received more state aid than we did. Sachem, with more wealth, should get less, not more!

How can Greece have the lowest per pupil cost but the highest property tax rate? The data indicates we are being short-changed 28 million a year by Albany. I have talked to legislators (Group 3) but apparently they can't fix it. So, taxpayers in Greece Central subsidize other districts but can't vote on their budgets.

Group 4, our Board of Education has decided that our tax rate is too high - a correct opinion based on the data - and that members can solve it by drastic cuts to the budget - an incorrect opinion not supported by 11 years of data.

You see, the State Education Department uses past spending as part of its social engineering, which means that next year we will get less aid and then the board will cut more and the state will reduce aid ~ ad infinitum.

Oh, and don't forget Group 5, homeowners, which thinks the STAR exemption is great. STAR is based on the value of personal property, not enrollment.

Who do you think makes out better - Monroe or Westchester County? How does STAR help commercial property owners? You know, property where people generate wealth?

Isaac Asimov said it best, "Such folly is the work of true genius. Smaller minds could not conceive of it."