



# The Tesson Times

A Publication of the  
Tesson Ferry Township Republican Club  
Volume 20 #10  
October 2015

## October Meeting

**Date:** Thursday, October 8th, 2015  
**Time:** 7:00 pm  
**Place:** Abiding Savior Lutheran Church  
School Cafeteria  
**Topic:** Pros & Cons of Mehlville Tax  
Increase



You will want to make a special effort to attend our October 8<sup>th</sup> meeting in which the TFTRC will have Brittany Wagner, a speaker from the Show Me Institute who will present the case against property tax increases such as the one proposed by the Mehlville School District.. A speaker presenting the case for such a tax increase has been invited. In addition, Jim Murphy will answer more specific questions regarding the Mehlville School district's financial stewardship. This will be a good time to bring your questions. We've extended a special invitation to members of the other Republican township clubs who might also be interested in attending.

Abiding Savior Lutheran Church, 4355 Butler Hill Road. is north of the Schnucks shopping center at Highway 55 and Butler Hill Road. The cafeteria is located on the lower level of the church and is accessible by elevator. Park in the back of the church to enter.



## September Meeting Highlights

September's speaker was Jay Ashcroft, candidate for Missouri Secretary of State. Jay is the son of John Ashcroft, who served as governor of Missouri and later as Attorney General of the United States, so he grew up in a family saturated with politics. As a result he saw both good and bad sides to political life. Jay earned a degree in engineering from Missouri University of Science and Technology (Rolla) and a law degree from St. Louis University. His motivation for entering the political arena is due to his concern for the younger generation's lack of opportunity for good careers and success. We no longer offer more opportunity for advancement than the previous

generation and we need to turn this around. Our state is not headed in the right direction and “we the people” need to get involved.

He said that the function of the office of Secretary of State is not clearly understood by the public. The secretary serves as the chief election authority in the state and holding fair elections is fundamental to democracy. We need to protect eligible people’s voting rights and we need a requirement for photo id in this state. The secretary of state is also responsible for clear wording of ballot items and can serve as the number one ambassador for bringing in new business to the state since the current governor doesn’t perform this function. Regulations are hampering businesses in Missouri and he would work to eliminate needless red tape. Mr. Ashcroft is running for this office because he’s willing to do the job well without using it as a career stepping stone.

In the question and answer session Mr. Ashcroft stated his strong pro-life stance, his support of second amendment rights and support of traditional marriage. He pointed out that the current secretary of state’s office doesn’t answer the questions regarding procedures that county election clerks ask. This is something he would change in his administration.

### **Other Club Business:**

The board recommended a “No” vote on the Mehlville tax increase (Proposition R). Jim Murphy handed out a paper outlining the actions of the school board over the past 15 years that have resulted in the current state of affairs. He outlined reasons for opposing the tax increase and fielded questions by the group. The motion passed 9 to 4.

**Elected Official:** State Rep. Cloria Brown gave us an update. The veto session is next Wednesday. Eleven bills have been whipped but they do not include right-to-work or the transportation bill. These last two bills may be whipped separately. Cloria serves on the budget committee which is doing a lot of monitoring on how the money is being spent. She has been assigned to a task force on human trafficking. There are twenty people on this task force. Cloria will be having a town hall meeting on September 21<sup>st</sup> at the new police station at 319 Sappington Barracks Road at 7:00 pm. She will be having a fundraiser on a Friday night in November. A flyer with more details will be sent to the membership.

**Committee People:** John Judd reported that Dean Plocher is running in a special election for state representative from his district. Josh Foster is working with this campaign. Volunteers are needed to go door-to-door and to man phone banks.

We have recently lost three members of the club: Al Repple, Donna Matuzsak and Anita Yeckel. A motion was passed that the club donate \$25 to the St. Anthony’s Charitable Foundation in memory of Anita. Yeckel.



## Coming Events

- **Thursday, October 8<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm.** TFTRC meeting at Abiding Savior Lutheran Church. Debate over Mehlville School District tax increase.
- **Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, Noon tee time.** Golf tournament fundraiser for David Gregory, primary candidate for state representative 96<sup>th</sup> district.
- **Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup>, 6:30-8:00 pm,** Rep. Cloria Brown's 2016 Campaign Kickoff, Reinhold Electric, 2511 Lemay Ferry Road across from Dierbergs.
- **Monday, October 26<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 pm.** TFTRC board meeting at Christy Hessel's home.

## Dean Plocher for State Representative

Our Republican nominee for the 89<sup>th</sup> District is Dean Plocher who is Vince Smugala's son-in-law. The special election will be November 3, 2015. Dean wants to stop Obamacare from hurting our economy. He also wants to eliminate job-killing taxes, costly regulations and wants to promote jobs and economic growth. You can contribute at [www.PlocherforMissouri.com](http://www.PlocherforMissouri.com) or mail a check to: *Plocher for Missouri*, P.O. Box 16065, St. Louis MO 63105.

There are door-to-door and phone bank opportunities. Please volunteer for Dean. His campaign coordinator is Tesson's own Josh Foster who can be reached at 314-640-2212. Please join with us in the effort to keep this seat Republican. Thanking you in advance.

*John Judd-Committeeman*

## Ted Cruz for President



I am extending a personal invitation to you to join presidential candidate Ted Cruz's team. He was elected to the Senate from Texas in 2012. Since serving in the Senate he has literally stood up for us by filibustering bad bills. He is pro-life and in favor of our second amendment rights. He filed a brief with the Supreme Court to let voters and state legislatures define marriage in their own states. He is a fiscal and foreign policy conservative.

Cruz is running a strong campaign. He had 175000 contributors all across America in the last fundraising period and raised over \$14,000,000. I'm confident he can

beat the democrat and with your help he will become our nominee. Please go to [www.tedcruz.org](http://www.tedcruz.org) to show your support. Thanks for your consideration.

*John Judd-Committeeman*



## **Golf Tournament for David Gregory – Monday October 12th**

All you golfers can enjoy a beautiful day on the links and support David Gregory in his primary bid for state representative – 96<sup>th</sup> district on Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup> at Tapawingo National Golf Club, 13001 Gary Player Drive, Sunset Hills, MO 63127. This is a noon tee time with registration and free driving range starting at 11:00 am. The cost is \$125/person and includes lunch, dinner, 18 holes and golf cart. Special guest speakers include Ed Martin, Jay Ashcroft and Senator Will Kraus. Hole sponsorship opportunities are available for \$500. RSVP David Gregory at 314-619-4230 or [david@gregoryformissouri.com](mailto:david@gregoryformissouri.com).

## **Good Book to Read**



Former Vice President Dick Cheney and his daughter Liz Cheney have co-authored an important book: *Exceptional: Why the World Needs a Powerful America*. Both have extensive expertise in foreign affairs and the military. Mr. Cheney was secretary of defense from 1989 to 1993 and vice president from 2001 to 2009. Liz Cheney has served as a specialist in US Middle East policy in both Bush administrations. Their purpose in writing this book is to set the record straight regarding America's role in supporting free and democratic governments throughout the world in the twentieth century. This was done through military strength, skillful foreign diplomacy and generous foreign aid. It's been an honorable record that has been earned at the cost of many American lives. Every president from FDR to George W. Bush maintained these policies because they believed that America is indeed exceptional and is called upon to shoulder this responsibility. Then Barack Obama got elected. All of this has been turned on its ear. The second half of the book describes the incredible damage this president has done to our military strength as well as our foreign relations. Anyone who browses conservative websites to keep up with current affairs is aware of much of this, but there is more that most people would be shocked to know. It's depressing to read this stuff, but it's vital that people know it; especially going into the next election cycle. We can't afford to make another major blunder like we've done in 2008 and 2012. Check this out at St. Louis County Library.

*Christy Hessel – Newsletter Editor*



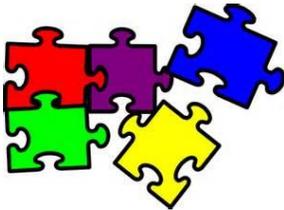
## Rep Cloria Brown's 2016 Campaign Kickoff – October 12th

Rep. Cloria Brown will have her 2016 campaign kickoff at Reinhold Electric, Inc., 2511 Lemay Ferry Road, 63125 (across the street from Dierbergs) on Monday, October 12<sup>th</sup> from 6:30-8:00 pm. There will be free pie and coffee for all. Please RSVP 314-623-5805 and show your support for Cloria.

## Looking for Volunteers



It's that time of year again. We're looking for people to serve on the board of the TFTRC for 2016. If you or someone you know is interested in serving as a member of our distinguished board, please contact President Dan Ried at 845-2762 or any of the other board members listed below.



## The Picture Changes When You Have All the Facts – Mehlville Proposition R

<b>2000</b>	<b>Mehlville School Budget 2014</b>	
\$78,000,000	\$107,000,000	+\$29,000,000
12,056 students	10,826 students	-1,230 students

Mehlville's budget has increased \$29,000,000 over 14 years or 2.7% per year. During this period overall inflation has averaged 1.88%. The Mehlville School District has a history of manipulating financial information; a great example is proposition P – read this article from 2003 and you will see for yourself:

<http://www.callnewspapers.com/Articles-i-2003-06-26-48123.111215-Chairman-says-full-disclosure-not-provided-on-Prop-P-costs.html>

It has been reported that Mehlville has lost revenue because of declining property values. This is not true! Missouri Law allows school districts to manipulate tax rates based on assessed value up to a statutory limit. If property assessments decrease the school district is allowed to recoup by increasing tax rates. This allows the district to have a stable source of revenue. If property values increase they are limited

to recover .08% of the increased value so they will not have a windfall from the higher assessment

Each year for the last 15 year, the administration has under-estimated revenues when producing the budget. The school board uses these figures to set the tax rate for the following year, thus inflating the need for a higher rate. The Mehlville School Board has raised the tax rate to the maximum allowed in all but one of the last 15 years. This game came to an end in 2014 when they reached the maximum authorized tax rate allowable by law.

It is widely publicized that Mehlville has not approved a tax increase in 30 years. Proposition P was a 49 cent tax increase approved by voters in November 2000. Proposition P was to raise \$63,000,000 to be used to improve district buildings and technology. Soon after passage it was discovered that the projected revenue generated from the tax increase was grossly underestimated. Instead of reducing tax rates and giving back the excess, the school board used the funds to purchase \$86,000,000 in COP bonds.

Prop P was a total disaster! The School District put forth a plan to update all of the schools and built Bernard Middle School and rebuilt Oakville Elementary School. Once approved by the voters, the school board went on a spending spree with little or no oversight. The cost overruns were in the millions. Bernard Middle School was so poorly built that today it uses substantially more electricity than does the much larger and older Oakville High School. Teachers and student often complain about the lack of temperature control at the school and often need sweaters in the winter months. Oakville Elementary was torn down and a new school built. Unfortunately it was built too small and today suffers from overcrowding. The roof had to be replaced after one year as it was improperly installed. To this day we are still paying for the prop P bonds and the district plans to transfer debt service funds that would be used to retire these bonds into general revenue next April. It is projected that the prop P bonds will cost Mehlville taxpayers \$144,000,000 by 2022.

Prop C called for a .89 cent tax increase for the purpose of building two auditoriums a new swimming pool and giving teacher raises. This measure was soundly defeated by the voters by over 60%. Despite this rejection when the opportunity arose to refinance Prop P bonds at a lower interest rate. Instead of retiring debt or using the money for needed HOV improvements or roof replacement, the school board opted to go against the will of the public and spent 6 million dollars to build a new auditorium on the Mehlville High campus.

Other examples;

*In May of 2006 the Mehlville School District approved installation of artificial turf field at the two high schools. The cost was \$1,354,815 and was said to be a revenue neutral expenditure as the field would be paid for by donations and fees. This never happened and the school district is still paying \$193,469 annually for the fields.*

*Unfortunately access to the field was never restricted and the fields have been damaged (cigarette burns, etc.) and are in very bad condition. The new maintenance component of the prop R includes replacing the two turf fields at a multimillion dollar cost.*

*A new tennis facility was constructed at Bernard Middle School at a cost of over \$500,000 dollars. The reason for building them was that a \$50,000 grant was available and the district felt the need to take advantage of it despite other facility needs in the district. When question as to why this was necessary, the administration cited that many students receive tennis scholarships and therefore the new courts were necessary. (Look for a new golf course soon as the golf team has needs)*

In April 2014 the Mehlville School Board approved 1.2 million dollars in pay raises for teachers and staff even though the budget was in deficit. This action alone has caused the deficit to explode and has caused the current financial crises. Rather than delaying these increases and going to the public for tax relief, the school board chose to recklessly spend money it did not have.

The original deficit forecast for the 2015 budget was 8 million dollars. This was then reduced to 5 million dollars and after cutting 2.5 million from the budget it is now forecasted to be 1.2 million dollars. It is reported that the district's health care cost have come in \$800,000 under budget. Rather than reducing the deficit to less than \$500,000 it has been proposed to use this money this year and maintain the deficit at its current level. The district does not wish to add these funds to the reserves as it would almost wipe out the deficit and hurt their chances for approval of a tax increase.

As part of the budget cuts busing was eliminated for all students that lived less than one mile from school. Parents had the opportunity to pay a \$250 fee and the district would continue bussing those students. Less than 12% of the parents opted for this option and now each morning and afternoon atrocious traffic jams occur at each of the district's elementary schools. Unfortunately with this small of participation the district has had little or no cost savings. The district promised to restore bussing if prop R was successful. Unfortunately the district failed to do their homework and they later found out it could not be restored. A citizen posted on Facebook that they thought state law required a 2/3 vote to pass a tax levy that included transportation. The district then checked it out and found that the Facebook post was correct. So they now have had to back off and say that bussing cannot be restored from Proposition R proceeds. So now the schools will have to deal with this traffic situation for an extended period of time.

When it was announced that Riverview Gardens was transferring students to Mehlville it was widely reported that Mehlville was **a low cost high achieving school district.**

That has now been twisted and Mehlville is being portrayed as a cheap district that has starved our schools and run off our teachers. This is the result of rhetoric and lies. You would think that we hadn't given teacher raises in years, yet this year was the first year in a long time that they didn't receive one.

KSDK reported that Mehlville spends less per student than any other school district of its size in the state. Again this is not true. Special School District expenditures in Saint Louis County are reported separately thus all special needs spending is not included in DESE's calculation. This is unique to Saint Louis County and these expenditures are included in the rest of the state. For example FOX R-6 is reported to spend \$9,560 per student including special needs. Mehlville is spending \$8,574 but when Special School District is included the figure would go up to \$10,774. Mehlville tax payers do pay a separate tax for Special School District and this has been raised many times over the last ten years. It should also be noted that DESE's calculation on cost per student defies logic. Mehlville spends \$107,000,000 on 10,820 students or \$9,889 per student yet DESE says Mehlville spends \$8,574 (This does not include Special School District.) We are unable to figure out why the discrepancy although it does appear to be across the board.

Dan Fowler who was the architect of proposition P is running the campaign to approve proposition R. It is the intention of this group to stick it to the Mehlville taxpayer, take a look;



### Dan Fowler

There are hard no voters and very few swing voters - a campaign is about moving at most 2% from fence sitters to yes voters and getting supporters out and vote. However, the bigger the turn out, the better our odds. That's why November is our best shot. We would have an even better shot in November 2016, a presidential year, but can't wait that long for an operational levy. November of 2016 would be a good year for a capital improvements ballot. So in my opinion, **Mike Baker** and **Dan Bramer** are correct. (Smile) Mehlville needs to get on a regular schedule to get back at being competitive with other districts. This November is just a start, not an end...I will never give up till death do me part...

Proposition R was placed on the November ballot at a cost of between \$40,000 and \$70,000. If the measure was delayed until the regular April school board election they would have saved this money. This would have had no affect on when the district would receive revenue from the measure if passed. This was done for strictly political reasons as they felt it had a better chance to pass in November.

The Mehlville School District has embarked on a campaign to scare the voters

into approving proposition R by twisting facts and creating crises where none exists. The Mehlville School District operating reserves started the year at 21% (\$21,000,000) far above the state minimum of 3%. Although it had been projected that this would fall to 16.5% by year end this decrease has not materialized.

The administration says that over the last ten years they have cut 100 teachers and administrators yet they never mention that with 1200 less students they were unnecessary.

The district asserts that teachers are leaving the district because of low pay. The average teacher salary in Mehlville is \$56,120. Mehlville receives over 100 applications for every teacher opening so finding teachers is and has not been a problem. This year Mehlville lost 61 teachers and who can blame them for leaving? Wouldn't you if you received a none-renewal notice from the district? (A tactic used to scare the public.) This isn't about compensation; it's about job security and lack of confidence in district leadership.

If expenditures per student were the key to success, we would all send our kids to Riverview Gardens as they spend \$2,400 more per student or to Saint Louis City Schools, they spend \$5,520. Our concern should focus on the achievement of our students, not this hogwash. The bottom line is that Mehlville may indeed have needs and they should be addressed. Unfortunately the School Board and administration have not shown the ability to make wise decisions. We must demand transparency and full disclosure from the School Board and administration prior to approving any new revenue as they cannot be trusted to spend it wisely.

Dr. Gains says we shouldn't be looking back but should be looking forward. This would be true if we learned from our mistakes and moved on. Unfortunately this school board not only didn't learn from their mistakes, they won't even admit that mistakes were made. Issues of this importance should be decided by an informed electorate. School Districts should be held to a high standard of transparency and truthfulness. The Media should present all of the facts not just one side. The Mehlville School District has hyped up the issue with half truths and created a self serving narrative that is hurting all of the citizens of Mehlville as this does affect property values.

<b>Graduation Rate</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>94.07%</b>	Lindbergh	94.30%	Fox	94.12%
<b>Percent of Graduates Taking the ACT</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>69.90%</b>	Lindbergh	83.05%	Fox	62.59%
<b>Composite ACT Score</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>22.4</b>	Lindbergh	24	Fox	22.6
<b>Free Lunch Student %</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>29.50%</b>	Lindbergh	19.00%	Fox	34.12%
<b>Free Lunch Students</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>3065</b>	Lindbergh	1113	Fox	3686
<b>Average Teacher Salary</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>\$56,120</b>	Lindbergh	\$58,489	Fox	\$59,349
<b>Average \$ Per Student Spent</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>\$8,574</b>	Lindbergh	\$9,398	Fox	*\$9,560

<b>Average Administrative Salary</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>\$102,914</b>	Lindbergh	\$112,678	Fox	\$124,108
<b>Professional Staff with Advanced Degrees</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>79.80%</b>	Lindbergh	80.10%	Fox	71.10%
<b>Years of Experience of Professional Staff</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>13.1</b>	Lindbergh	13.5	Fox	13.1
<b>Students to classroom teachers</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>18</b>	Lindbergh	18	Fox	21
<b>Attendance Rate</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>92.10%</b>	Lindbergh	95.80%	Fox	91.30%
<b>Students to administrators</b>	<b>Mehlville</b>	<b>321</b>	Lindbergh	274	Fox	272

\*includes special needs spending. Source D.E.S.E.

**The Tesson Times will be mailed by US Postal Service only to TFTRC members who requested it and whose dues are paid.** After you read this newsletter, please pass it on to a neighbor or friend. The opinions printed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the Tesson Ferry Township Republican Club, but those of individual writers. Paid for the Tesson Ferry Township Republican Club, David Gregory, Treasurer and not authorized by any candidate or candidate committee

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