

# Quid Est Veritas

## For The Cost Of One Car Payment

By Patrick Weadon

I thought I would start this month's column with a question: How much is \$ 350 worth to you? To many people (including yours truly) it's a great deal of money - about the amount of a car payment.

To be honest, if the county executive let it be known that in 2007 my "taxes" were going up by the aforementioned amount, I would not be exactly happy. On the other hand, if Mr. Leopold informed me the 350 bucks collected would be used specifically to improve our county school system I would be glad to pay it.

With this in mind, I believe anyone who cares about our children's future should support the efforts of Superintendent Maxwell to convince the county council to raise the local income tax rate from 2.5 to 3.2 percent. If implemented, the increase has the potential to raise an additional 80 million dollars for a school system that is badly in need of revenue. (This piggy-back tax would, as noted, result in someone making \$50,000 a year having to pay an additional 350 dollars in taxes).

I know this idea will not sit well with many of the residents of our county, but before you dismiss Mr. Maxwell's idea as a "socialist plot," consider some facts. Anne Arundel is the fifth richest county in our great state, but 11th when it comes to the amount of money we spend on our schools. While we pinch pennies, counties like Howard, Montgomery and Prince Georges are investing heavily in their schools and making substantive plans to ensure a bright future for their children.

If this trend continues it will likely be those jurisdictions, and not Anne Arundel, that will reap the lion's share of future jobs and economic growth. In addition, there are practical considerations in the



educational realm that cannot be solved by embracing the status quo.

In a few years this area, due to the BRAC initiatives, will have to deal with a huge influx of families. The good news is they are coming here to fill the many well paying government jobs that form the foundation of this county's economy. The bad news is we currently do not have the educational infrastructure to accommodate them.

The scary thing is many of our school board members and lawmakers just don't get it. Some of them are so afraid of offending their constituents, or departing from their love of "voodoo economics," they can't bring themselves to even mention the words "tax increase" (even though they know in their hearts the education budget will never be fixed without additional revenues).

Typical of this mindset is Victor Bernson, the newest member of the school board, he was appointed by the now ex-governor, Bob Ehrlich. He believes we should reign in spending before any tax increase, and that "it's too easy to ask for the moon and stars, say it's all for the children, and then force the county executive and the county council to be the bad guys."

Note to Mr. Bernson: Ehrlich is no longer governor because he wasn't bright enough to understand that while Marylanders (like most people) don't like to pay taxes they value education, and will

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