

## New funding formula will give less to Bexley schools

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The [Bexley City School District](#) will see a drop in state aid under Gov. John Kasich's new funding proposal, leaving local leaders angered and disappointed.

Kasich's proposed \$72.3 billion two-year budget, pitched to the public Feb. 2, would increase the state's sales tax by a half-percent, but income tax rates would fall. The proposed budget would also cut income taxes for small business; raise rates on cigarettes, commercial activities and oil and gas produced by fracking; and increase funding to low-income districts.

Kasich called it a "redistribution."

Bexley is among the districts slated for a decrease in state funding under the proposal. While district leaders are not surprised, they aren't happy either.

"It's the first time talking about local effort, and penalizing districts for that," Bexley Superintendent Mike Johnson said.

He argues that the bulk of school funding has been placed on the shoulders of the community, and they've stepped up to the plate each year with tax dollars.

Johnson said the state is now taking those efforts by districts to respond to the need "and using it against us."

He pointed out that Bexley has not had an increase in state funding in more than 10 years, pushing more and more of the funding onto the shoulders of taxpayers.

In fiscal year 2003, the district received \$4,602,000 in state funding, according to information in the district's five-year forecast projections, released this past fall. It was the highest amount of funding from the state to date.

This year, the district is estimated to receive \$3,897,030.

But under Kasich's latest proposal, Bexley schools would face an 8.6-percent cut in fiscal year 2016 and a 9.3-percent cut in 2017.

By fiscal year 2017, Bexley would be receiving an estimated \$3,231,266 in state aid under the new proposal -- a \$1.4-million decrease from 2003.

According to Innovation Ohio, a nonpartisan organization, 55 percent of all school districts in the state of Ohio would be receiving less direct aid than they did six years ago.

District Treasurer Chris Essman said while the cuts are not completely a surprise, "It's never good."

In fact, Essman built 5-percent cuts in state aid into the district's 2016 and 2017 fiscal budgets, anticipating bad news.

But Essman's preemptive move only addresses a portion of Kasich's proposed cuts, which total 17.9 percent over the two-year span of the proposed budget.

According to Essman, each cut represents about three-quarters of a mill in property taxes.

Essman said he'd been out of town all week and was looking forward to returning to work this week to better crunch the numbers.

Johnson, on the other hand, was quick to voice his issues with the proposal, pointing out that private, parochial and charter schools continue to enjoy funding increases year after year while public education continues to take a hit.

He acknowledged that schools experiencing increased enrollment should receive an increase in funding, but the current proposal in no way addresses the unconstitutionality of the way Ohio funds its schools, he said.

Both Johnson and Essman know that changes to Kasich's budget proposal are likely to be made between now and June 1 once legislators debate it, but they expect the news will still not be good for Bexley.

**Original Article:**

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