

January 2015, Newry Maine

The claim that the current school funding mechanism is fine since Newry's

> tax rates are not necessarily high by comparison to other towns misses  
> the point.

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> The current school funding mechanism takes away local control, a  
> fundamental principle supporting the right of the town government to  
> tax. Without the ability of voters to determine their spending, the  
> right of the town to raise taxes becomes questionable.

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> The principle of equality under the law - the same law applies to all -  
> is being violated in that Newry is being singled out to both pay more  
> than the state formula for public school budgets as well as to having  
> local control removed. This despite Newry never having been allowed to  
> vote on the issue.

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> The actual tax rates Newry pays is a red herring, as the Newry budget  
> could have much more spending on Newry's needs, such as local roads. In  
> fact, Newry can be claimed to be short-changing its citizens by not  
> spending much on other items due to the overwhelming domination by the  
> public school budget.

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> In Maine, the tax rate applied to public schools is not based primarily on  
> property valuation - the idea of tax rates for school rising with property  
> value (basically socialism - payments assessed based on nominal wealth  
> of citizens) has been rejected. Instead, taxes are raised based on costs  
> - how many students each town has to educate. Except for Newry, which  
> somehow has been made exempt from the concept of equality before the law.

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In response to the various individuals who are treating the prospect of

> Newry withdrawing from the school district as the Education Apocalypse,  
> a number of points to consider:

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> - Every other district but one in the state uses a tuitioning-based  
> formula for funding. Most are doing very well. Why is SAD44 such an  
> exception where using the state standard funding formula would be The  
> Apocalypse?

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> - The Newry withdrawal proposal has both a "Stabilization Fund" which  
> ramps down the \*mandatory\* funding over a number of years, and a "Targeted  
> Grant Fund" which provides additional funding for the district. What  
> that means is that the Newry payments to the district could be the same,  
> or even more, then they are now. The difference is that after withdrawal  
> the voters of Newry have to be convinced to vote for it. Make the case  
> and the funding will be unchanged.

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> - With the withdrawal proposal the main difference between now and after  
> is that the district needs to convince the voters of Newry to pay as  
> the district wants, whereas now the district just puts out its hand and  
> Newry has no say (and has to pay). It is of concern that opponents are  
> so adamant about this - are they afraid there is no case to be made for  
> the current funding?

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> - It is interesting that the other towns have repeatedly passed  
> up a chance to negotiate a change in funding formula that is not  
> withdrawal. Basically, they are putting all the chips on the failure of  
> the withdrawal proposal, after which they will be able to go along as  
> always. That is a shame, because they are sending a clear signal that  
> they have no respect for the issues that Newry is raising about the  
> unfairness of the current exceptional situation.