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## State must do more for Lamorinda schools, say elected officials

By Nick Marnell



Assemblywoman Catharine Baker presents her views on school funding, as state Sen. Steve Glazer awaits his turn. Photo Nick Marnell

down the state's growing pension debt. Baker pointed to the teacher shortage, which forces local school districts to compete for the best teachers. She noted that many facilities costs have been pushed from the state to the local school district level.

Both Glazer and Baker said that rising costs of special education have strained school district budgets. "If your school district can't provide special education services for a student, and if one service that a child needs is in Idaho, your school district pays for that child to be educated in Idaho," Baker said.

While the senator and assemblywoman focused on redistribution of state revenue and more accountability over double-digit spending increases, the analysts said that tax increases may be necessary to fund local schools.

Gerry Shelton of Capitol Advisors cautioned that because of Proposition 13, which limits increases on property taxes, California depends too heavily on personal income tax, which accounts for 69 percent of the state's general fund revenue. Shelton stunned the crowd at Stanley Middle School by revealing that 40 percent of the state's \$93 billion personal income tax revenue is paid by 70,000 taxpayers, mostly through capital gains taxes, a far more volatile revenue source than property taxes.

Shelton blamed Proposition 13 for cutting the legs out of school funding, and he advocated for a split roll, whereby commercial properties are taxed at market value rather than only at change of ownership.

"How often does Disneyland change hands? That is an opening that is available," Shelton told an appreciative audience.

Baker quickly wrecked that narrative. "I do not support split roll," she said, explaining that a small business would have a very difficult time surviving under that taxation arrangement. "And Disneyland pays a lot in taxes," Baker said.

Though LAFSD receives only \$8,000 per student from the state, far less than the average, Shelton said that Lafayette will never get as much money as a low-income school district. The state school funding system is equitable, but not equal, Shelton said, because it costs more to educate in needier districts.

"We're always on the short end of the stick," Glazer said. "Revenues have come back but we're still struggling in Lamorinda."

"These issues are debated every week in the Capitol," Baker said, as she and Glazer agreed that the most important thing that they do in Sacramento is to try to increase funding to schools.

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