

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## The disconnect

As Zion Township supervisor, I am elected to assist those in need — those who have lost their jobs, can't pay their utilities are losing their homes. These are people who had to take pay cuts or who had jobs they depended on, but were cut.

Day after day, I listen and try to find resources to help them keep their homes and keep their kids in their schools. It breaks my heart that there are so few resources to help.

Then I read a teachers' union picket sign that says: "Don't make the kids pay when the district can." This is where the disconnect is.

The money that they are speaking of is only tax dollars. To put this in perspective, the average home in Zion is assessed at about \$125,000. Taxes for this home will run at about \$5,000 this year. That is over \$400 per month!

To understand our real estate tax dilemma just imagine if you, like many of our teachers, live in an area outside of Zion-Benton High School where homes are easily assessed at \$250,000 (or more), your tax bill would be \$10,000 according to our assessment rates. Of the 240 homes sold last year in Zion, 135 of them were foreclosures.

People could find ways to keep their homes if they just had to pay their mortgages, but when the property taxes are added, it buries the hom-

owner. Here is the connect: The "district" that the sign refers to is actually our homeowners and they can't afford it! Many of them are seniors on fixed incomes!

I beg any teacher to spend one hour at Zion Township and listen to the real state of our community and then go back and argue that what they are doing is "in our best interest."

Look at the school board members. Some have family members in this union, while some are union representatives themselves. Even so, they are unanimous that they have to make these changes in order to keep the school solvent.

This isn't about teachers' step increases. It is about saving our community from utter financial ruin. If they truly care about the kids, then care about their parents' property taxes, too, or there will be no youth left in our community to teach.

Teachers need to take a bigger view of the situation. See it from our community's point of view. The school board are our community members representing us. Renegotiate based on the state of our community and not what is being pushed from an office in Gurnee. We need to be on the same team here and be an example for our Swarm!

*Cheri Ditzig  
Supervisor  
Zion Township*