

- To The Citizens of Morrow County -

On the evening of Friday, February 21, 2003 the Morrow County School Board conducted a "Special Meeting" with the published purpose of establishing their position on Senate Bill 372. This meeting was called on Wednesday, February 19, 2003 and public notice was given on Thursday, February 20.

Senate Bill 372 was introduced in the Oregon Legislature on Tuesday, February 11 at the request of the Ione Self Determination Committee as a part of the process of removing the Ione Community from the Morrow County School District and forming a separate Ione School District. The full text of Senate Bill 372 is available on the Oregon Legislative website at www.leg.state.or.us/billsset.htm. However it is important to realize that this bill is an amendment to statutes that are already in existence and is therefore incomplete if read separately from those statutes. ORS 330.003 - 330.400 are also available on the Oregon Legislative website at www.leg.state.or.us/ors. Please read them both carefully in determining what you believe the relevant facts to be.

The Morrow County School Board raised concerns with the Ione Self Determination Committee about some items in this bill on Wednesday, February 19. We attempted to discuss their concerns with individual Board Members prior to the "Special Meeting" and in writing with the Board as a whole. Instead of being allowed to explain the areas of the bill that the School Board had expressed concern with, the Ione Self Determination Committee and the members of the public who attended this meeting were disregarded.

We provided written copies of our position on those specific items to the Morrow County Superintendent at 8:30 a.m. on the day of the meeting so that Board Members could have them in advance of the meeting and take them into consideration when making their determination. The Board Members did not receive them until after the meeting had started and did not take the time to read them or allow us to read them aloud.

There was no public comment allowed. The Ione Self Determination Committee was only allowed to answer questions directed at us and we were not even allowed to do that fully and without interruption. As a result, the audience was denied the opportunity to hear a complete explanation of Senate Bill 372.

The Board then voted on a pre-written resolution that states their unconditional opposition to Senate Bill 372. They did so without full knowledge or understanding of the facts regarding this bill. And they did so knowing that they had not considered all of the facts, nor had they taken the time to allow their legal counsel to fully determine the facts.

The Ione Self Determination Committee did offer to ask the Senate Education Committee to delay acting on the bill in order to give the Morrow County School Board a chance to consider all of the facts and make a well informed determination of their position on the bill. This offer was rejected. We also offered to discuss any changes to the language of the bill that they might propose, but that offer was discarded as well. They chose to make their decision without regard to any alternative point of view and with full knowledge that they did not have all of the relevant facts.

Printed below are the Ione Self Determination Committee's responses to the three major concerns raised by the Morrow County School Board in regard to Senate Bill 372. We urge you, as a resident of the Morrow County School District to read them and consider them carefully before you reach an opinion on Senate Bill 372.

What About Lexington?

The Morrow County School Board indicated that, by using the terminology "The Ione School District shall consist of the **attendance area** for the Ione School" we are attempting to take the entire Lexington area into the Ione School District.

Attendance areas for each school in the district are designated under Morrow County School District policy. We have attempted to, as closely as we could determine, follow the designated **attendance area** for the Ione Schools when we drafted the legal description included in our petition. This does not include Lexington or Pine City which are, under MCSD policy, "nondesignated" attendance areas.

Senate Bill 372 still requires us to file a petition with the ESD. That petition has already been filed with the ESD and a copy is available at the Morrow County Clerk's Office. The Morrow County Assessor has used the legal description in the petition to draw the boundaries onto a map.

No, we are not attempting to include Lexington, nor could we do so if we wanted to.

Our position on the students in the Lexington and Pine City areas is just what we have previously stated it to be. We believe it would be unfair to students from this area, who attend Heppner Schools, to be included in the Ione School District, so they are not.

However, we feel that it would be equally unfair to the students from this area, who attend Ione Schools, to deny them this choice. We hope that the Morrow County School District will treat these students and their families fairly.

What about the division of Assets and Liabilities?

The Morrow County School Board indicated that we are using Senate Bill 372 in order to dictate how the assets and liabilities of the district would be divided between the two new districts.

Senate Bill 372 requires that the petition contain a **proposal** for the distribution of all real and personal property and a **proposal** for the distribution of all assets and liabilities of the Morrow County School District. The bill also outlines a method of dividing the assets and liabilities that the **proposal** in the petition shall use. It does not state that the assets and liabilities shall be divided using this method, simply that the **proposal** in the petition shall use this method.

ORS 330.123 (which is not amended by this bill) requires that the district boards of each district (Morrow County School District and Ione School District) immediately after the boundary change make an equitable division of the then existing assets and liabilities between the districts. It also allows for a Board of Arbitration to determine an equitable division if the two districts are unable to reach agreement within 20 days of the boundary change.

No, we are not attempting to dictate the terms under which the assets and liabilities of the district would be divided, nor can we legally do so. The Ione Self Determination Committee is simply a non-elected committee of citizens, we are not the appropriate elected body to conduct such negotiations.

A final division of assets and liabilities would have to be negotiated between the two school boards. We simply included a **proposed** structure under which such a division could take place.

Why no remonstrance?

The Morrow County School Board indicated that we are trying to circumvent the local process by removing the remonstrance provision of the current statute.

Oregon Statute also requires that a school district provide education in grades K-12. The District Boundary Board (ESD in our case) is required to consolidate any district not offering K-12 into an adjoining district.

Morrow County School Board has never voted not to consolidate any, or all, of Ione's schools into Heppner. Simply that they are not "pursuing consolidation at this time."

Morrow County School Board is currently working on revising their policies, including the policy requiring a six month process in order to close a school.

Current statutes allow up to 120 days for the ESD to act on our petition and a remonstrance to be filed. If a remonstrance is filed then the future of the Ione Schools would remain uncertain until after an election, probably in September. Under these circumstances, even if we won the election, the boundary change would not take effect until May 31, 2004. We would remain in the Morrow County School District, with our schools managed by them, for another full year.

We have already secured the signatures of over 10% of the registered voters of Morrow County and nearly 80% of the registered voters in the area that would become the Ione School District.

Given this fact and the way the community of Ione was treated on Friday night, we do not feel that it is unreasonable to eliminate the possibility that the Morrow County School Board could move forward with consolidation as part of an effort to stop Ione from seceding.

SELF-DETERMINATION IS ABOUT IONE'S PARENTS AND COMMUNITY DECIDING WHAT IS BEST FOR IONE'S CHILDREN