



BRUCE JOHNSON
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR
STATE OF OHIO

Letter to the Editor:

As Ohio's Lieutenant Governor and Development Director, I feel it necessary to share with readers why I am against the proposed Taxpayer Expenditure Limitation (TEL) amendment to the Ohio Constitution this November. The TEL would be bad for economic development, dismantle public education, raise the cost of government, limit democracy and encourage attorneys to file lawsuits.

It has been my economic development experience that responding quickly to infrastructure needs with state and local support is extremely important in encouraging economic growth. The TEL would place severe limitations on new infrastructure assistance. These restrictions will cause business leaders to avoid doing expansion projects in Ohio.

For example, the City of Marion provided \$3.2 million in assistance for infrastructure needs to a Whirlpool expansion project. This temporary increase in government spending would likely have been unconstitutional under the TEL, putting at risk our relationship with Whirlpool's 8,600 employees in Ohio.

Providing a high quality rigorous education for Ohio's children is key to our economic future. Every community struggles to find the resources necessary to provide a quality education. Nearly every school levy that passed in last Tuesday's election, would have failed under the conditions imposed by the TEL denying thousands of young students a better educational opportunity.

The TEL will raise the cost of government, not reduce it. Taxpayers will pay more and receive fewer services. Ohio has a strong bond rating, saving taxpayer dollars. Handcuffing the legislature will hurt the state's bond rating. Using more taxpayer money to pay higher interest rates means fewer government services.

The TEL is un-democratic. This amendment is so poorly written that it actually gives veto power to non-voters. Any local spending increase beyond the TEL's constitutional cap requires the approval of a majority of electors in that locality, not just a majority of those electors voting. The TEL gives those NOT voting, the power to affect the results of any election necessary to fund critical services, including economic development.

Because the TEL is confusing and riddled with problems, it will be a boon for lawyers, often at taxpayer expense. The amendment includes language allowing anyone to sue the state or any local government to enforce compliance. This is an open invitation for lawyers to sue in our lawsuit-happy society. To top it off, if successful, lawyers are entitled to be reimbursed for costs and attorney fees with your money -- taxpayer dollars.

Responsible business leaders, city and school officials and thousands of Ohioans who have studied this amendment have concluded that the TEL amendment is wrong for Ohio. While I agree with limiting government spending, the right way to accomplish this is by exercising fiscal discipline - not relying on a constitutional crutch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bruce E. Johnson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Bruce E. Johnson
Lt. Governor