

## **DeKalb Chamber Board of Directors urges support of school referendum**

To the editor:

The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors urges area residents to support DeKalb School District 428's proposed referendum Feb. 5. The Chamber board believes good community schools directly affect the community's ability to attract and retain businesses. The board applauds the school district and the ad hoc referendum committee for their work in crafting a plan to address the current and future needs of the district.

The plan is a comprehensive effort to expand the capacity of our schools in ways that are educationally sound and fiscally responsible:

Build a new high school for 2,500 students on a 75 acre parcel located north of Dresser Road, between First Street and Annie Glidden Road; Build a new elementary school in Cortland on land to be donated by a developer; Repurpose the existing high school as a middle school (Huntley) with moderate renovations in the first phase; Repurpose the existing Huntley Middle School as an elementary school (Chesebro) with slight to moderate renovations in the first phase; and Repurpose Chesebro School as a district Early Childhood/Pre-K Center with slight to moderate renovations in the first phase.

The Chamber board believes citizens and businesses prosper in communities in which education is a priority. A strong and well-supported K-12 educational program is one of the key indicators of a community's economic vitality.

The high school is severely overcrowded, and more students are on the way. Several elementary schools are so crowded that the district has found it necessary to use portable classrooms. The district's population is expanding, and conditions such as these will only become more widespread in the coming years.

District 428 lacks the necessary capacity to serve its students, and it is up to us to remedy this situation. The longer we wait the higher social and economic price we will all pay. The Chamber board believes we should begin today to build a foundation for our students that we'll be proud of for many years to come.

The DeKalb Chamber of Commerce represents more than 500-member businesses. It exists to support the advancement of business and community interests. It also seeks to improve the business climate through the facilitation, advocacy and provision of information and leadership in business, governmental and civic matters that affect the DeKalb area.

Kurt Schweitzer, chairman of the board  
DeKalb Chamber of Commerce