



THE LARGEST PAID NON-DAILY NEWSPAPE

MONDAY, APRIL 09, 2007

## TOP STORY >>Governor supports plan for district

IN SHORT: Legislators, Beebe wrap up session with \$1 billion for public schools.

By ALIYA FELDMAN  
Leader staff writer

Governor Mike Beebe said Friday that he supports Jacksonville developing its own school district but that the residents must be prepared for the several steps it will take to become a reality.

“I support self-determination anytime people want it,” Beebe said in an interview with The Leader. But before that can happen, Jacksonville will have to achieve unitary school status and be released from desegregation court supervision. Representative Will Bond, D-Jacksonville, introduced two bills that would allow for the opportunity for Jacksonville schools to create their own district.



PREVIOUS POSTS

[TOP STORY >>Blackcats arrive](#)

[SPORTS >>Lady Badgers win three in 'Rumble'](#)

SPORTS >>LR Lutheran easy  
for Lonoke

SPORTS >>Hardball Badgers  
pound on Panthers

EDITORIALS>>Kudos

EDITORIALS>>Kudos

EDITORIALS>>Traumatic  
loss

EDITORIALS>>Huckabee a  
pauper

OBITUARIES >> 04-04-07

EVENTS>>Spring 2007



“Getting out from the Lake View court case, increasing facilities funding and giving additional money for students,” tops Beebe’s list of legislative victories, he said.

The Lake View court case, filed in 2001 against then-governor Mike Huckabee by Lake View School District in Phillips County, claimed school funding was inequitable.

The decision required the State Assembly to remedy the inequities.

Beebe said that by creating the funding stream with an ongoing revenue source and dedicating money for facilities, every student will benefit. As far as state money for school facilities, Beebe said districts have already submitted their needs and that the facilities budget was crafted from that needs list.

His budget dedicates \$456 million of the state surplus toward facilities, plus \$108 million from general revenues over the next two years with a total contribution of \$600 million for facilities. The total money earmarked for public education should be more than \$1 billion, including \$40 million for pre-kindergarten education.

The formula the state currently uses to finance the schools is based on the relative wealth of each district, which is then required to make matching payments. Many districts have already dedicated all available revenues to leverage improvements they’ve already submitted to the state.

Whether or not the additional money dedicated to school facilities will expedite repairs, remodeling and new

construction will depend upon individual districts, according to Bond.

“The state is willing to put (its) share in for a worthy project, but the district needs to pay its share,” Bond said.

Schools will receive adequate funding despite tax cuts, Beebe said. The largest of these is the cut in state taxes on groceries. “These were the biggest tax cuts in Arkansas state history,” he said. He thinks the tax cuts were “responsible” and said services will remain sufficiently intact.

Senator Bobby Glover (D-Carlisle) led the effort to pass two successful bills, the grocery sales tax decrease from 6 percent to 3 percent and a bill that allocated needed funds for the interstate highways.

“Bobby is a good friend,” Beebe said. Arkansans will have to vote on using \$575 million the bill allocated for the repair and construction of the interstate highway system.

“The highway bill is not specific for one project,” he said. Beebe said federal money would be necessary for the construction of a North Belt Loop highway, which would create a shorter path from the Hwy. 67-167 at the Jacksonville landfill to North Little Rock. “I’m hopeful for it,” he said. “But it’s for the future.” He said he hasn’t approached the federal government for money for such an addition to the system.

In addition to increasing school funding and passing the grocery tax cut that he says will be the beginning of its end, Beebe pushed some poverty-alleviating measures such as moving low-income Arkansans off the tax rolls. But he lost big against the payday lenders who have

modeled themselves as modern-day loan sharks by forcing customers to pay huge interest fees when they get cash advances.

As a senator from Searcy, Beebe was one of only two who voted against the payday-lending law. "Further efforts are needed (next legislative session)," Beebe said, adding, "If the people don't push for something before then."

POSTED BY THE LEADER AT 7:37 AM

---

[<< Home](#)