

STATE SENATOR • JOHN J. GLEASON • 27<sup>TH</sup> DISTRICT

# Gleason Press Release

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## **Lawmakers Making Sure Students are Protected Following Consolidation Vote**

*Students could continue classes if ballot is approved*

LANSING—Perry and Morrice students could continue the school year in their respective districts without disruption if a merger proposal is approved next week, under a bipartisan initiative by state Sen. John Gleason (D-Flushing) and Representative Dick Ball (R-Bennington Twp.) that was signed into law today by Governor Jennifer M. Granholm.

Under an amendment to Senate Bill 730, the consolidation would not take effect until July 1. This would make sure the effective date of the consolidation does not occur until this current school year is completed.

“No matter how you feel about the consolidation issue, our number one priority must be to make sure students are not negatively affected by the outcome,” said Ball. “Under previous state law, if consolidation were to be approved on Jan. 15, those districts would immediately cease to exist and classes for this year would be thrown into turmoil.”

“We must ensure a continuity of education for all students in both districts.”

Shiawassee County residents in the Perry Public Schools and Morrice Area Schools will vote next Tuesday on whether to consolidate their school districts. This is the first mid-year school consolidation vote to take place in Michigan, as well as the first time a consolidation effort has been initiated by public petition rather than the schools themselves, which has necessitated Ball’s changes in state law. The lawmaker has not taken a position on the consolidation issue.

Ball thanks Sen. Gleason, the author of SB 730, for working together to include Ball’s amendment to the bill. With the governor’s signature, SB 730 is now law, becoming Public Act 1 of 2008. The new law amends the Revised School Code language to change all references to “handicapped person” to “person with a disability.” The term had been replaced with more current language in sections of the Michigan Administrative Code dealing with disabled students, but still remained in some sections of the Revised School Code.

“I hope this is a sign of more bipartisan cooperation in the coming year as we put aside our differences to work for the good of the people of Michigan,” said Sen. Gleason. “The residents—primarily the students, parents, teachers and school employees of Perry and Morrice—of Rep. Ball’s district were facing an urgent and unique situation, and we had to work fast to handle it. In

the end, I'm happy that my legislation designed to benefit Michigan students was able to do that in more than one way."

John Gleason is a Democrat state senator from Flushing and Dick Ball is a Republican state representative from Bennington Township. Under the amendment, an interim school board also would be appointed by the local RESD board immediately after a consolidation vote and would govern the school districts to be consolidated as separate parallel districts until the districts officially consolidated on July 1.

"This is an unprecedented mid-year ballot proposal, and we must give the districts more time if the proposal is approved," Ball said. "A new consolidated school board would take over from the interim board, fine-tune the plans that have been formulated during the past five and a half months, and provide a smoother transition for the September school start."

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