

Our opinion

Don't do it to children

Once more, we are being treated to a graphic demonstration of the old saying that mud flows down hill.

The state government, faced with tight budgetary times, is trying to dump its financial problems on the localities.

Secretary of Education James Dyke announced Friday a plan to trim the state's education budget by about \$101 million.

The cut means that Virginia's localities will experience cuts ranging from less than 1 percent to 12 percent.

In Greene, that cut will be about 1 percent, or slightly less that \$51,000.

That may not seem like much, but consider that about 80 percent of the school's budget is salary and benefits, which no school board would dare cut, leaving the remaining 20 percent, devoted to classes, equipment, and facilities, open for cuts at a time when Greene's student population is growing monthly.

Obviously the state must make cuts somewhere in light of the mystifyingly sudden and large budget deficit, but must they be made at the expense of our children?

Children are easy targets -- they don't vote.

The parents of school age children, however, can vote.

This plan must pass the General Assembly before it becomes final, so there is time to change the state's mind.

People in Greene who have school age children, or people who are seriously interested in the future of those children,

should ask their General Assembly representative to work against this plan.

Say what you will about the need to share pain in this tight economic time, children should be left out of it.

We need those children to be well educated and motivated in order to turn around the mess that we as adults have created.

If we value Virginia's future, we should make sure that the schools in Virginia are well funded.

If you value Greene County's future, you should struggle to see that your children receive as good an education as is humanly possible.

With the vast changes in our society in recent decades, our school systems have been called on to perform more roles than ever -- babysitter, parent, teacher of societal values.

Now is not the time to cut back on funds and risk the progress that the schools have made.

The Department of Education plan is a bad plan and the General Assembly should make every effort to find money for Virginia's schools.

Schools should never be exempt from tight budget times, that is unrealistic, but schools should be the last to feel the bite.

The state should not simply unceremoniously dump its problems on the localities, especially at the expense of the children.