Paying for past mistakes

To the editor:

I have been blessed over the years in my dealings with scouting, 4-H and veteran affairs to meet people from all walks of life.

A few years ago, I met some school teachers who were part of a state commission that toured Michigan and did a study on consolidating Michigan schools. This study was done in the late 1960s. That's right, the 1960s. They found out then that the Michigan school system was antiquated, inefficient and bureaucratically top heavy. They said, the "handwriting was on the wall" and declining student enrollment was coming.

Now in 2011, we are paying for mistakes that have been made since then. Lately, every time you pick up a paper or turn on the news, one superintendent after another is crying for funding, saying 95 to 100 percent of their budget is going for salaries and benefits.

Right here in Iron County, West Iron spent $10 million for a new school and Forest Park spent $14 million.

Even though everything indicated declining enrollment, we were told that unless this was done, no kid in Iron County would continue to get a proper education, and what do we have to show for $24 million, empty classrooms, lockers and buildings.

With small student populations and $7,500 per student annually, our U.P. schools should be turning out scores of rocket scientists. Locally we have two school superintendents less than 13 miles apart making almost $300,000 annually. In Iron Mountain and Kingsford it is worse. There are two superintendents less than five miles apart making the same.

It is the same all over the state. The Detroit Public School System between 1995 and 2005 cannot account for over "$4 billion," not "million," dollars in state money according to the "Detroit Free Press and State Investigations.

The days of big mines and industries pumping millions into school funds for good public relations are over. Taxpayers can no longer support these individual fiefdoms. Our schools and their administrations should be consolidated. If a city of millions can have one superintendent, I think we could have one for the whole U.P. of 200,000.

Also, we should stop building these architectural wonders or Taj Mahals for schools. If a new building is needed, build a simple efficient, multiuse, cookie cutter design building.

I know this article will offend a lot of people, but the truth is the truth. Right now, Michigan is No. 3 in the nation in per student K-12 spending.

Taxpayers can no longer afford to ante up every time a school board cries poverty. Schools boards must get out of the mindset that there is an unlimited gravy train of big industry and government money for them to spend and live within their means.

-s- Don Wolf
Iron River

A vote for
the kids
To the editor:
A vote in support of the Windsor Recreation Authority is a vote for a positive future for Iron County.
Like the rest of the country, Iron County has been hit hard by the recession. In order for our county and area to survive, we need to show support for children and give them what past generations have had.
A 'Yes' vote is a vote saying we believe in Iron County.
-s- Maggie Re
-s- Jean Lindbeck
-s- Jill MacPherson
-s- John MacPherson
-s- Pat Cullnan
-s- Steve Beck
Iron River