

From: [Buzz Thomas](#)
To: publisher@knoxfocus.com; editor@knoxfocus.com
Subject: Letter to the Editor
Date: Monday, February 20, 2017 3:18:37 PM

Dear Steve,

One of your recent editorials had some “alternative facts” I wanted to bring to your attention. As a wise man once observed, we are all entitled to our own opinions but not to our own facts.

1. The Knox County Board of Education is not asking the state legislature to “index property taxes.” I’m aware of no school board member who is asking that property taxes be raised even by the rate of inflation. We’re simply asking that the tax rate not be forcibly cut every four years when property is reappraised.
2. Teachers did not get a 6% pay raise last year. They got 3%. We’re trying to get them 4% this year. The cost would be divided between us and the state. When the state says they are giving teachers a 3% raise, their funding formula requires Knox Countians to pay more than half of it. So instead of a 12% raise over two years as you stated, it would be about half that amount. That’s pretty reasonable given that Knox County is one of the most prosperous counties in the state yet not even in the top twenty when it comes to teacher pay. Equally important to us this year is raising the pay of our “non-certified” staff such as teaching assistants and cafeteria workers. Current wages for these folks are shamefully low.

The Board of Education is guilty of neither “artful doublespeak” or being “pluperfect bureaucrats.” They are hard-working citizen legislators who are trying to help Knox Countians build the best school system in the south. Not so we can pat ourselves on the back. So our children and grandchildren will have the kind of future they deserve.

Many thanks for giving education the attention it deserves.

Buzz Thomas
Interim Superintendent

P.S. Thanks for printing this. I will be working on a salary schedule for the last ten years. In the meantime, I hope you get to feeling better soon.