

THURSDAY APRIL 2, 2010

Use shale, tobacco taxes for early childhood education

TO THE EDITORS:

Gov. Ed Rendell's budget for 2010-11 proposes no increases in early childhood funding, yet the unmet need is enormous. It is clear that investing in quality early childhood now saves money for everybody down the road. We have to be talking about finding the money to make those investments now.

A recently released poll (commissioned by Pennsylvania's Associations for the Education of Young Children and conducted by Tulchin Research) shows that more than four in five voters across the commonwealth (81 percent) support providing early childhood education to all children

in Pennsylvania. A full 71 percent of voters believe early childhood education should be state-funded. The money has to come from the public, and that means taxes.

There are ways to raise taxes that won't reduce the wallets of retired folks or hard-working families. We are the only state that doesn't impose a surcharge on natural gas extraction. Money is being made on the exploitation of Pennsylvania's Marcellus shale. Out-of-state companies need to contribute something to our public welfare. We are also the only state that doesn't tax smokeless tobacco.

If we are talking about investing in our young children,

why not consider taxing the things that make them unhealthy, like snacks with no nutritional value or electronic entertainment? Let's get brave and start talking about ways to raise the revenues we need to ensure the well-being of our commonwealth.

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