

## “Opportunities, Challenges and Alternatives” You make the right decision

My fellow Biloxi resident:

To those who live in Eagle Point, Holly Bluff, Woolmarket and other areas of Biloxi that happen to be in the Harrison County School District, let me share my feelings on an important issue and make sure you are aware of the opportunities and alternatives before you.

It's said “WE ARE BILOXI,” and as such, I've always thought that ALL BILOXIANS should enjoy the same privileges, opportunities and benefits.



When I first became Mayor in 2015, one of the issues that I thought needed to be addressed was the idea that children of all Biloxi residents should be allowed to attend Biloxi Public Schools. And they should have this ability without having to ASK PERMISSION AND PAY TUITION because they are considered part of the Harrison County School District. I was told that changing it is too involved of a process, it would take too much cooperation, and it would be difficult to do. I DON'T ACCEPT THAT.

Promises made by this city so many years ago are always on my mind. Since I became mayor, we have made millions of dollars in water, sewer and drainage improvements. We have broken ground on two new fire stations, worked with the county to upgrade the library and added an adjoining community center. With Councilman Barrett and the support of the council, we're working to make sure Ward 7 gets its fair share.

You might not know that the Biloxi Public School District is an A-Rated school district. In fact, just the other day it was awarded its 3rd Blue Ribbon School. The Biloxi Public Schools was organized in 1866 and has been a significant factor in the success of Biloxi. We're proud of our school district and the investment we have made in it.

The Harrison County School District is now asking for your permission to borrow \$55 million to address overcrowding and security issues. It's so much money that it requires you to vote. It will be on the ballot on November 6 for you and others who live in the Harrison County School District. As Mayor, my goal is to do what I think is best for Biloxi, ALL OF BILOXI.

Rushed decisions usually do not turn out very well. Ask yourself, like me, why only now (less than 50 days ago) are you being made aware of these problems and the only solution that the Harrison County School District has to them. Every well thought out decision has pros, cons and alternatives to doing something or not doing something. You're already paying HIGHER TAXES for your children to attend the Harrison County School District – \$250 more a year on a \$200,000 home. And now, for 20 MORE YEARS! Do the math. Many thousands of dollars over time.

It's my opinion that the current RESIDENTS, along with future residents and BUSINESSES, in this growing area of our city, will contribute MORE THAN ITS FAIR SHARE to what is being proposed by the Harrison County School District, WITHOUT REAL BENEFIT. We have people who are living a mile from a Biloxi Public School who are bused to schools farther away.

About 75% of the residents do not have school-age children; LOWER TAXES is their issue. More than that, there's the future to consider. When new residents consider a new home, one of the primary considerations is the public school system. Real estate agents will tell you it's a huge factor. When people consider Biloxi, they assume it's the Biloxi Public School District. THAT OUGHT TO BE THE CASE.

I certainly appreciate county school leaders saying they need to address overcrowding and security issues. It's a huge, sprawling school district – 465 square miles and 14,813 students, bordered by Bay St. Louis to the west, and by St. Martin and Ocean Springs to the east. In this case bigger is not better. Be assured when and if necessary, children will receive the individual attention, advice and direction in Biloxi Public Schools. Let me also point out that Biloxi provides real support to Harrison County schools. Last year alone, Biloxi paid over \$1.2 million in gaming taxes to the Harrison County School District.

Again, there are FEASIBLE ALTERNATIVES to the \$55 million bond. Let the two school boards work together to the benefit of the taxpayers and to the FUTURE. The Biloxi Public School District could certainly help with the overcrowding issue, given the opportunity. Ask questions and decide what's right for you and your finances.

If you want to see a discussion of all of the options, which could lower your taxes – MOVE FORWARD. Fill out the form on the back of this newsletter and return it. Be aware of the issue, the opportunities it presents, and how you can TAKE ACTION FOR CHANGE.



Andrew “FoFo” Gilich  
Mayor of Biloxi

## School enrollment

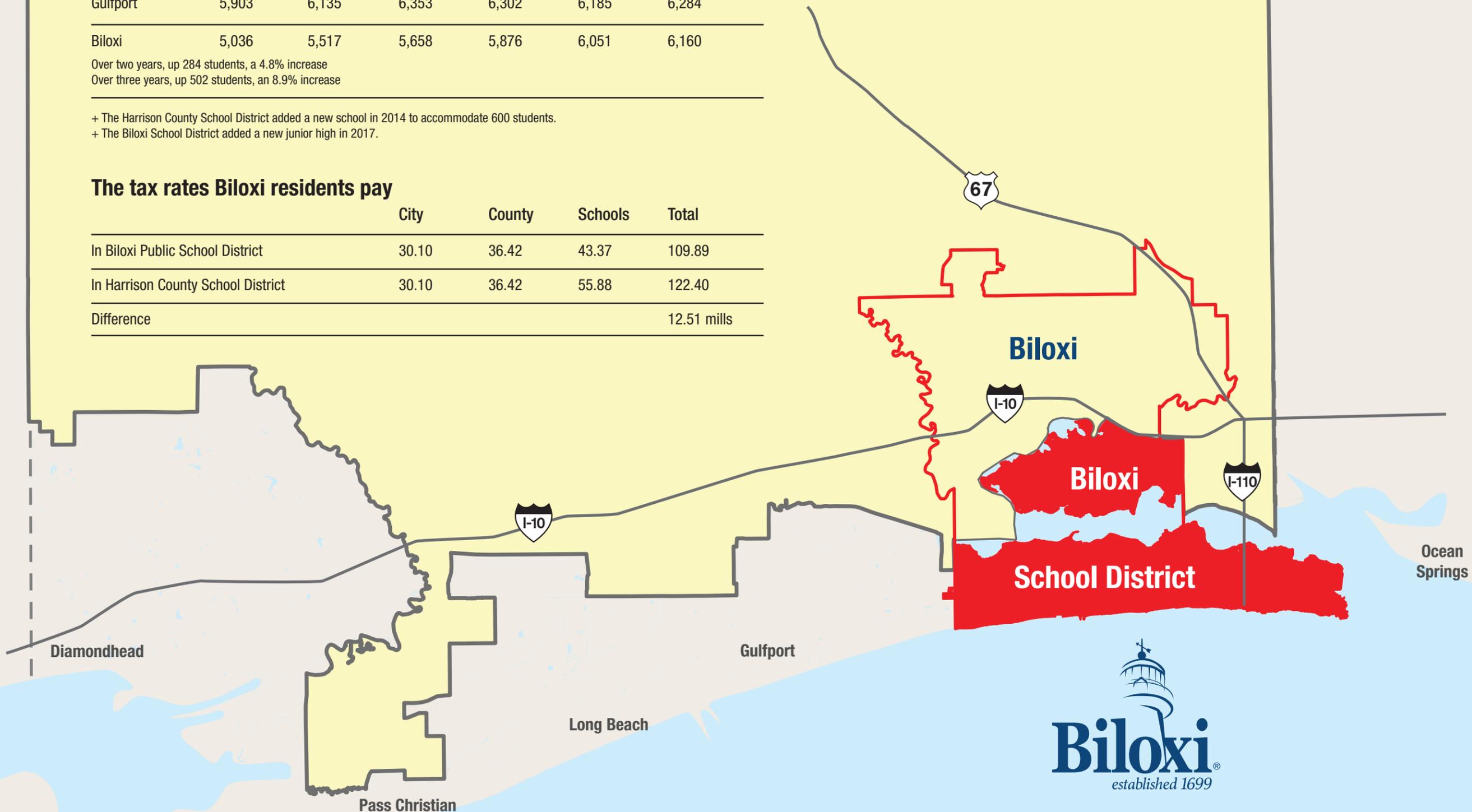
	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
<b>Harrison County</b>	<b>13,671</b>	<b>14,036</b>	<b>14,303</b>	<b>14,555</b>	<b>14,518</b>	<b>14,813</b>
Over two years, up 258 students, a 1.7% increase Over three years, up 510 students, a 3.5% increase						
Gulfport	5,903	6,135	6,353	6,302	6,185	6,284
Biloxi	5,036	5,517	5,658	5,876	6,051	6,160
Over two years, up 284 students, a 4.8% increase Over three years, up 502 students, an 8.9% increase						

+ The Harrison County School District added a new school in 2014 to accommodate 600 students.  
+ The Biloxi School District added a new junior high in 2017.

## The tax rates Biloxi residents pay

	City	County	Schools	Total
In Biloxi Public School District	30.10	36.42	43.37	109.89
In Harrison County School District	30.10	36.42	55.88	122.40
Difference				12.51 mills

## Harrison County School District



## There is a way for school districts to be better aligned

- Under state law, school district lines can be changed by agreement of the school boards of adjacent districts.
- 51% of voters of a specific territory can request or "petition" that the school district lines be changed.

## The difference between county and city school taxes

- Biloxi homeowners in the Biloxi School District pay 12.51 mills less than Biloxi homeowners in Harrison County School District.
- The fact is, those with a \$200,000 home in the Harrison County School District pay \$250 a year more in taxes than if they were in the Biloxi School District. Businesses and landlords pay even more. That's thousands of dollars over the course of a \$55 million bond.

## Speaking of money

- The City of Biloxi, through gaming revenue, distributes more than \$1.2 million a year to the Harrison County School District.

Be aware of the issue, the opportunities it presents, and how you can TAKE ACTION FOR CHANGE.

To: Mayor Gilich  
City of Biloxi

From:

Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Biloxi, MS 39532  
Harrison County, Mississippi

I am a qualified elector registered to vote at the above address in Biloxi, Mississippi.

I am interested in learning about what steps I can take to change my property from the Harrison County School District and move it into the Biloxi School District.

I am interested in receiving more information on how to accomplish this. My contact information is:

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Voter #1

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature Voter #2 (if applicable)

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT NAME

\_\_\_\_\_  
PRINT NAME

### Return by

Mail: Mayor's Office  
140 Lameuse Street  
Biloxi, MS 39530

Email: [pabide@biloxi.ms.us](mailto:pabide@biloxi.ms.us)

Fax: (228) 435-6129

# BNews Special Edition

Mayor Andrew "FoFo" Gilich  
and the Biloxi City Council  
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