

## A bridge Over Troubled Water?

Which side are you on? The question seems as appropriate today as it was in the early 1930s when Florence Reece wrote those words to a traditional tune to rally striking coal miners in Harlan County, Ky.

But rather than mine owners and their hired deputies on one side and independent workers on the other, we have -- without passing judgment on who are the "good guys" -- the State College Area School District Board of School Directors and its supporters facing State High Vision and other dissidents across a metaphorical picket line.

Which side are you on? Renovate or build new? One building or two? Several small schools or one large one?

School board members and administrators put their plan -- for one renovated and expanded building on the north side of Westerly Parkway -- on public display earlier this month.

Last week, David Paterno presented an alternative, a "Sensible Solution," as he called it, continuing the semantic struggle -- "Vision," "Citizens for Constructive Progress," the provocative and fabricated term "mega-school" (which has been banned from this page) -- that has characterized the battle.

But rather than singing labor anthems, Paterno and his group of volunteers could have paraphrased The Who: Meet the new plan ... same as the old plan.

Their "solution" is similar to that first announced by the school board in what seems like the days just after Prohibition was repealed: Two high school buildings as now configured with a bridge spanning the parkway for students to pass safely between them.

The estimated cost is also closer to the original \$67 million than to the current plan's \$97.6 million price tag.

Paterno's proposal deserves consideration on its merits, and not just a cursory "thanks for your time."

It may provide the bridge -- a literal one over Westerly Parkway, of course, but more importantly, one to span the great divide between the two sides in this highly contentious debate.

Somehow we must all get on the same side on this issue so that, while the song may still have historical significance, the question it asks is no longer locally relevant.