

## CITIES, SCHOOLS HURTING FOR CASH SELLING AD SPACE



As the country continues to struggle through these tough economic times, cities and schools alike are telling companies that they will sell them ad space on almost anything right now. These cash-strapped entities are doing whatever it takes to make money in an effort to keep employees on the payroll and keep operating budgets at effective levels. Chicago has even utilized banners hanging from a couple of its iconic bridges in an effort to raise funds. The banners were advertisements sold by the city to local companies, advertisements that some citizens are calling 'commercial graffiti,' and 'visual crimes.' A school district in Colorado has begun selling ad space on students' report cards while a district in Utah has passed a law that allows ads to be placed on school buses within the district. All of these new advertising ventures by city governments and school districts is causing uproar across the country. The debate is raging on whether or not these advertisements should be allowed since this has never been done before in the past. The mayor of Chicago, Rahm Emanuel, and his administration, is working to reduce a \$600 million budget hole. They are hoping to raise \$25 million in funds from selling advertising space on the city's bridges, buildings, garbage cans and electrical boxes. "I think it's disgusting," Chicago resident Linda Rosenthal said. "The architecture in Chicago is stunning. To see this awful advertisement angers me." Kathleen Strand, a spokesperson for the city, had the following to say about the city's advertising campaign "The municipal marketing strategy is really about pursuing innovative opportunities to avoid having to cut city services or increase the tax burden on Chicagoans," Strand said. Diane Wagner, the spokesperson for Bank of America, released the following statement regarding her company's ad placed on one of Chicago's bridges: "We agreed to be the first company to display on the bridge because we want to help the city explore new revenue sources and we think this is an innovative way to generate new revenue," Wagner said. The chief strategy officer for Leo Burnett Company, Stephen Hahn-Griffiths, thinks the ads are a 'visual crime.' "It's like commercial graffiti," Hahn-Griffiths said. "It makes no sense from a marketing perspective and I question the intent of doing this because it does not seem like a smart decision." The school district in Colorado that now sells advertising space on its students' report cards raises close to \$30,000 per year with the ads. The ads are for the CollegeInvest savings program. "Parents understand where we are at with the funding issues and most of the reaction has been positive," said school district spokeswoman Lorie Gillis. Jim Phillips leads tours of Chicago's most beloved bridges and he had the following to say about the ad issue: "If it gets to the point advertisements go on more of these historic structures, I don't think there's any way to stop them on others," Phillips said. "What if you put a NASCAR suit on the Picasso? What if you slapped a Google sign on one of the lions at the Art Institute?"

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