

How other states cope with school growth

By **SUSAN EVANS**

The Tribune-Democrat

— Pennsylvania isn't the only state grappling with schools construction debts.

Here's what other states are doing:

- In Florida, Orange County imposes a \$7,000 impact fee on each new home. Collected funds pay for new school buildings.
- Elsewhere in Florida, where growth is outpacing infrastructure, developers are building schools and leasing them back to the district for \$1.
- In Oregon, legislators are considering asking developers for "System Development Charges" to help pay for new schools, and possibly parks and recreation facilities.
- In North Carolina, where like Pennsylvania the only funds for new schools are property taxes, leaders hope that a portion of proceeds from the new state lottery will help with school construction costs.
- In Wisconsin, school districts must get voter permission for debt for capital projects like building or renovating buildings. About one-half of these referenda pass.

Some school projects have had to go before the voters four or five times before they passed.

• Colorado's fastest growing residential areas are feeling the same pinch as the mostly residential Johnstown suburb of Westmont, which also has few businesses properties to pay the bills.

Westmont Hilltop School District, along with two other districts with few business properties, received special state education aid this summer from the state legislature.

Like Pennsylvania, Colorado is looking at measures such as consolidation of school districts or "smart growth" zoning that would require a mix-