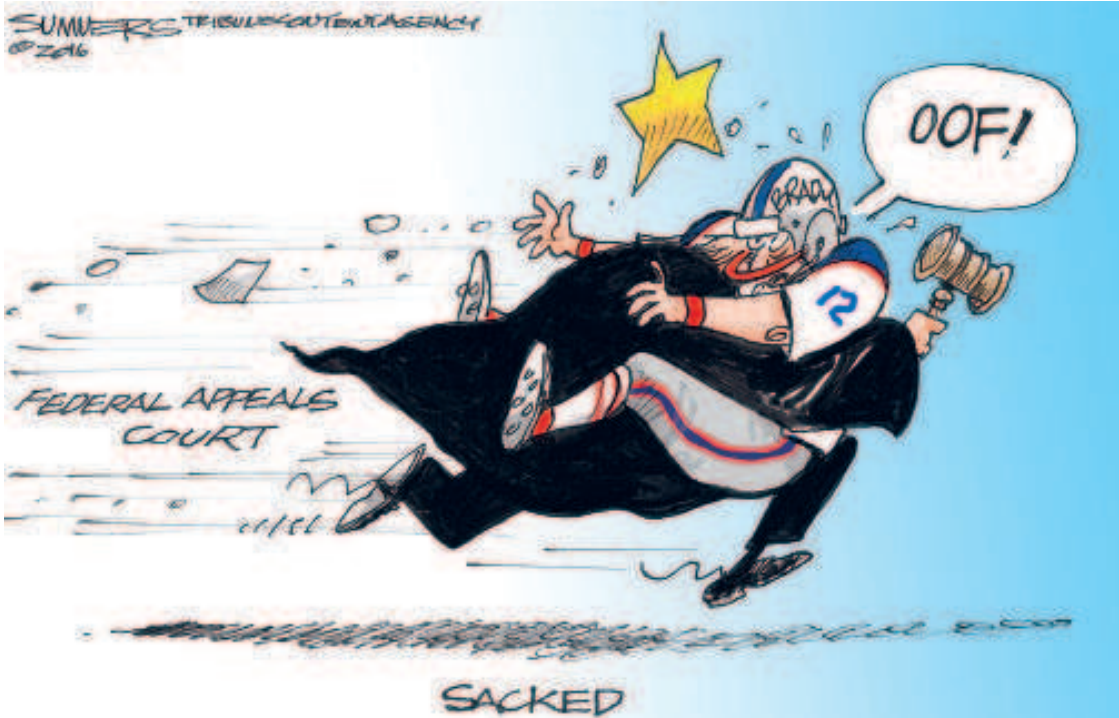


## O P I N I O N



## Letters to the Editor...

The Nugget welcomes contributions from its readers, which must include the writer's name, address and phone number. Letters to the Editor is an open forum for the community and contains unsolicited opinions not necessarily shared by the Editor. The Nugget reserves the right to edit, omit, respond or ask for a response to letters submitted to the Editor. Letters should be no longer than 300 words. Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned. The deadline for all letters is noon Monday.

To the Editor:

Voters' pamphlets are often used as fire starters on these cold Central Oregon spring mornings. Not this time, not in my house. Curious, I immediately flipped through to find the arguments against the upcoming school bond measure. There were none. BUT, there were several pages in favor of the bond. My favorite snippets: "...\$10.25 per month" (assessed \$300k); and "Our community supports our kids and our kids support our community." — J. Bachtold

I married into a third-generation Aylor family from our tiny town of Sisters and often hear stories of pride in how our unique community stands in the gap for each other. As a parent of a 2012 grad, I can attest to the direct impact that Sisters School District was in our son's success, who will graduate nursing school this Friday after four arduous/grueling years.

I'm so thankful for this community and fellow teachers who supported the prior construction bond 14 years ago, from which Sebastian directly benefitted.

I am a homeowner who will be honored to be part of the financial responsibility from this bond.

Recently, I heard a keynote speak of the irony of magazine title progression (or deterioration). First, it was *Life* magazine (included everyone, everywhere), then *People* magazine (a slightly narrower view), then there was *Us* magazine (whatever group you identify with, but certainly not everyone) and now in 2016 we have *Self* magazine (because that is who we now only cater to. Really?).

Please look up and see how 35 cents a day will positively impact all of us who enjoy this beautiful place we are fortunate enough to call home.

Future generations will learn by example what it means to invest in ALL generations, as it is time to rally and invest in theirs.

Three yes votes coming from our home (one absentee).

Becky Aylor

See **LETTERS** on page 9

### Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Chance showers 54/32	Mostly sunny 60/34	Mostly sunny 58/34	Mostly sunny 60/30	Sunny 70/34	Sunny 75/na

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## Celebrate community and our schools

By Winter Lewis  
Guest Columnist

On May 17, the Sisters School District is proposing a general obligation bond for major maintenance and facility upgrades, Measure 9-108.

The intent of a bond is to free up dollars for use in the classroom immediately, take care of "100,000-mile" repairs, and upgrade facilities that are no longer in working order.

As a preface, it needs to be emphasized that bonds are an integral and normal part of the funding of our schools in tandem with local option levies and fixed tax rates. Since 1990, fixed tax rates for schools have dropped 30 percent per student in inflation-adjusted dollars. Local levies and bonds help compensate for this drop.

A short survey of tax liabilities in neighboring districts demonstrates that the Sisters School District is below Redmond, Bend/La Pine and Madras schools. With the addition of an overdue bond, the total tax rate for Sisters School District will be at or below these neighboring districts. This is cause for celebration. Our schools have historically performed better, by state academic benchmarks, compared to our neighboring districts, at a lower cost.

It should be noted that with the State's "new normal" of school funding, with bonds and levies supporting reduced fixed-rate dollars, school districts must be creative in their financing of building maintenance. As such, building maintenance can be divided into two main categories: routine maintenance and major maintenance. Think of it like your car. The Sisters School District has taken care of all regular oil changes, rotation of tires, and changed spark plugs through its routine maintenance programs. Major maintenance, or the "100,000-mile" projects, have been funded at a lower rate since 2011 when, in the face of a recession, the District did not reissue a bond as others were retired. Measure 9-108 will get us back to healthy bond

levels to invest more in major maintenance projects.

Beyond the funding nuances, let's celebrate what is good about this bond, the schools and this community.

Notably, the process in which this bond was formed deserves celebration. The new administration and school board engaged the Sisters constituents to help shape the list of major maintenance items to be brought before the voters. They listened, calibrated and are ready to execute the prioritized maintenance with an independent project manager and separate citizens oversight committee. Building in these new oversight mechanisms will support the District's goal of sound quality and prudent use of funds.

Let's celebrate that enrollment decline, after years of economic headwinds, has plateaued out with signs of growth. A bond now will help us catch these shifting, favorable winds. Functional facilities, improved classroom resources, and a renewed pride in the schools will aid recruitment of new families and neighboring students in an open enrollment environment.

Let's celebrate the fact that the presence of strong schools has contributed to the improvement of our personal wealth, locally. Ask any Realtor in town: The presence of good schools supports a strong housing market.

Let's celebrate the symbiotic relationship of the schools and the community. The intellectual resources available within the community have given our kids programs that are simply not found in any other district. Flight instruction, Americana Project, Luthier programs, IEE and Ecos are all rich programs that supplement and support our students' formal educational opportunities.

Finally, our new administration has been busy building on these programs to stay nimble in a dynamic and changing educational landscape. Our future looks bright. Let's celebrate this. Join me in voting "Yes" on Measure 9-108.

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