

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 Unpublished items are not acknowledged or returned.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:

Knowing we have a special election in January but not sure of exactly why we are being asked to vote on this measure, I searched the Internet for some answers. I wish to share and encourage others to find the information as I did. We might be receiving a voter's pamphlet but it is also available on line at the Secretary of State's office for Oregon.

Current law, passed by the Oregon legislature this past session, which goes into effect this coming year, provides an extension of an already existing tax on hospitals, an increase of 0.07 from previous level, and a new 1.5 percent tax on managed health care, some healthcare insurance plans, and the PEBB.

Because of the budget shortfall, this two-year tax was passed by the legislature and

signed into law, to ensure that all Oregon children would continue to have healthcare, that 95 percent of Oregonians will continue to have healthcare, and that 210,000 Oregonians will see lower premiums. There is a 1.5 percent limit on how much health insurance premiums can be raised in Oregon.

If it fails, the state would lose an estimated \$630,000-\$960,000 in matching federal funds.

If we vote no, the measure would remove this temporary tax. From what I read, it appears that nearly 25 percent of Oregonians have a disability, and veterans are approximately 17 percent of that group, and would stand to lose medical care under the OHP.

Until recently women were charged higher healthcare premiums for having pre-existing

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Sisters Weather Forecast

Courtesy of the National Weather Service, Pendleton, Oregon

Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Sunday	Monday
Mostly Sunny 43/24	Chance Showers 47/31	Mostly Cloudy 46/30	Chance Showers 41/24	Mostly Cloudy 39/25	Mostly Sunny 43/30

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Jim Anderson

Save the pine trees!

Sisters is one of the Tree Cities of the USA; there are signs around town saying so. That means you, me, the city and school movers-and-shakers should have a better-than-casual understanding of what trees mean in our lives.

It was the off-hand remark in the bus barn story "Citizens question new bus barn facility," *The Nugget*, November 22, page 1) about the "removal" of 23 pines and unspoken number of junipers, and to replace them with a chain-link fence that really put a burr under my saddle.

To begin with, I wonder if the new bus barn is really necessary. My old pal Bob Couch, with whom I logged back in the late '50s, had an expression I love: "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

As near as I can see, the only reason this great plan for a new bus barn is in the works is because of the so-called \$4 million windfall.

If my memory serves me correctly, there was a piece in *The Nugget* a while back saying there aren't as many students attending the Sisters schools this term as in the past, and income from the state represented by student numbers is down. That (to me) means there aren't as many students riding the busses as in the past, and our current society's young couples are probably raising pets rather than kids. So, why the big crush for getting a new bus barn — just to spend the money?

But it's really the removal of those 23 pines and assorted junipers that's got my dander up. Every tree we have around Sisters has a role to play in our current and future welfare. There should be a Tree Commissioner who says yay or nay to cutting any tree growing in Sisters Country.

Remember photosynthesis? It is a process by which plants, algae, and certain microorganisms transform light energy from the sun into the chemical energy of food. Sound familiar? During photosynthesis, energy from sunlight is harnessed and used to convert carbon dioxide and water into organic compounds, namely sugar molecules — and OXYGEN. Humans

— you and me — require oxygen to sustain life. "Removing" another 23 healthy pines — along with an assorted bunch of junipers — is, in my opinion, stupid.

"If it ain't broke, don't fix it" is the code I believe we should all live by. I never heard a word about replacing our old, well-used bus barn until someone heard about four million bucks for the taking. The way things are going, 20 years from now — long after I've gone out among the stars, and the old Patterson Ranch is wall-to-wall houses — someone will ask, "Hey, why did we build that crummy bus barn?"

Twenty years from now there may not even be a Sisters school system as we know it today. I'll bet it'll be something you and I can't even dream of. Maybe students will all stay home and do their schooling on their computers, or some other fancy gizmo that will replace human teachers. Whatever way things go, however, I'll give you two dollars to a donut those huge, yellow, gas-guzzling school buses won't be in the picture, and someone may ask, "Why did we remove those 23 trees, and when are we going to replace them?"

The plan hasn't even got off to a start and the planners are talking about messing with school traffic, removing parking spaces, redoing student parking and considering tampering with the school campus.

The bus barn planners say they may even consider a new location. Well, I hope that'll save the 23 trees! But wouldn't it be better to put the money into creating new playgrounds, or purchasing new electronic gadgets.

Forget the bus barn that'll be ancient history in 20 years. Put the money into creating a research forest for science teacher Rima Givot and the crew to use as part of the IEE program. A week-long camping activity for all ages of students would be a winner for the Sisters schools, and forget "removing" those beautiful trees.

We could also consider just saving the money for a rainy day.

Opinions expressed in this column are solely those of the writer and are not necessarily shared by the Editor or The Nugget Newspaper.