

OUR VIEW

Voters should approve school bond measure

Area voters should support a proposed \$4.845 million bond for the La Grande School District in the May 17 election for a host of reasons, including the fact that an investment in education is never a bad idea.

No one likes to pay more taxes and, let's face it, for many of us it seems like there are always plenty of government hands trying to get into our wallets.

Having recognized that, it is crucial for voters to remember that funding specific government entities — such as school districts or police and fire services — is an essential investment.

The new bond will help pay for the construction of an academic and athletic center and would finally replace the old Annex building next to the La Grande Middle School.

Passage of the bond means a few good things for district patrons. For one, the state will match the \$4.845 with \$4 million as part of the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching program. Also, passage of the bond will not raise tax rates among property owners because of a recent refinancing of a previous bond approved by voters in 2014.

Both of those points are distinctive. Approval of the bond means extra money from the state and means a homeowner won't pay more taxes.

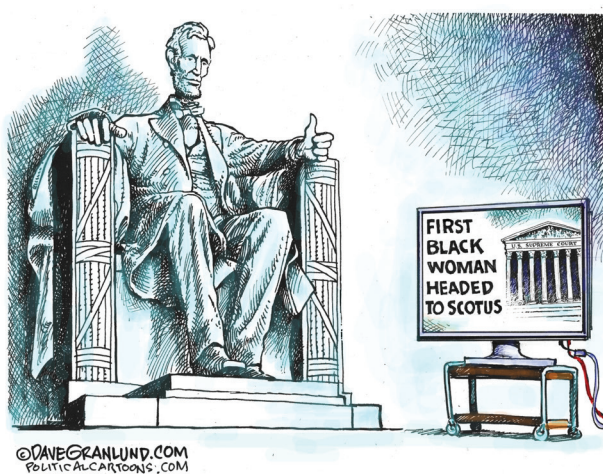
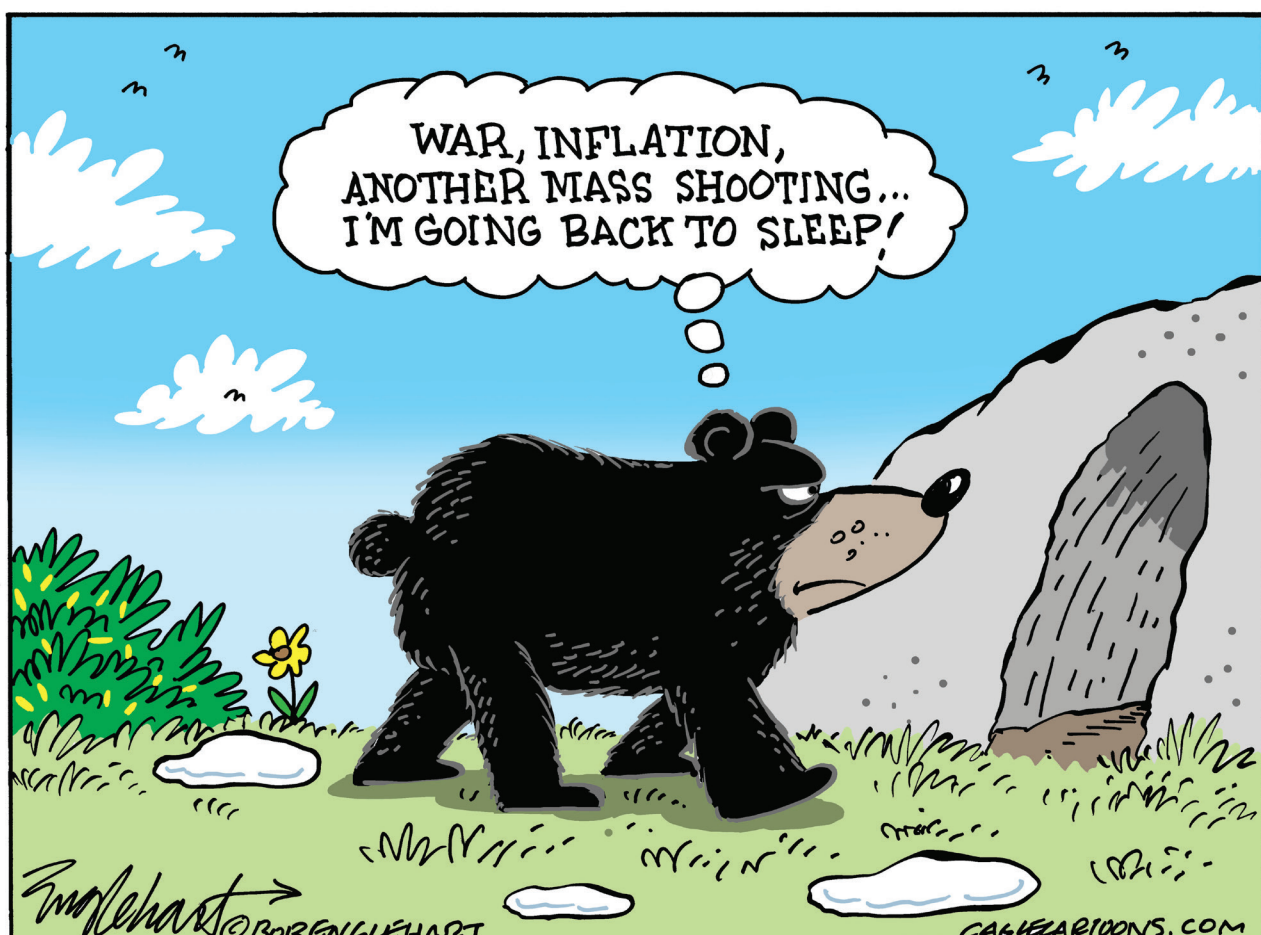
That's a hard scenario to overlook. Rarely, in fact, do so many intangibles line up in such a manger to create new infrastructure for our schools without adding to residents' tax bills.

Our schools are important to the overall health and viability of our community. Just as our police and fire services need the best equipment to do their jobs, our educators require the best in terms of infrastructure that voters can provide.

That means finding the most cost-effective way to provide the best environment for our youth to learn and grow.

The proposed bond is a way to accomplish some mighty goals with little, or no, impact on patrons and property owners.

Education is our pathway to the future. We must always keep in mind that the passage of a bond is not only about the youth in our school system now but also very much about future students.



YOUR VIEWS

Replacing the worn-out Annex is the only option

The proposed school district bond is community-supported, it is needed and it is fiscally conservative.

As many of you know, La Grande Little League uses the Annex, on the La Grande Middle School grounds, on a yearly basis to run tryout and batting practices. In the future, we hope to be running camps throughout the year so that children are around baseball and softball all year and not just in the spring.

The current Annex school building is worn-out. Replacement is more cost-effective and the only option for this building. As we had tryouts on March 12 at the LMS Annex, parents were amazed at the quality of the building. The ceiling is falling down, and there are only stairs to get in and out of the building, which made it harder for many of our older guests. The overall quality of the building is devastating when you look at our community and the pride that we take.

The LMS Annex is an area where children should feel supported and protected when they are at practices, camps or other school activities, not a place where they could truly get physically hurt.

Also, if you have ever tried to schedule a baseball or softball practice, then you know there is a shortage of places to do so. When you have so many wonderful sporting activities running during the year, with such a wonderful turnout of children, it is abundantly clear that this space needs to be replaced so we have more gyms for these activities.

So, a Yes vote for the bond is appropriate. It will cost millions of dollars less than maintaining what is left of the Annex now, it will allow

the school to offer more programs and reach a more diverse group of students, and also allow outside organizations a chance to offer more programs for the community.

Please join La Grande Little League in voting Yes for the La Grande Middle School Annex Bond Measure 31-105.

**Brooke Hewitt, president
La Grande Little League**

Bottom line: Taxpayers will be paying an extra \$4M

I am a local taxpaying citizen within the La Grande School District. I am voting No on the upcoming school bond proposal in May.

We have been assured by school officials that the passage of this bond would not raise our current taxes. It was explained that the current bond loan could be refinanced, so that the current tax payments, when added to the new bond payments, would not result in a raised tax rate. This is misleading and deceptive to the voters in my opinion.

What we are not being told and what I have not been able to ascertain (at the time this letter was written) is how many more years we will be paying the current tax rate to pay this bond off. In my experience, when I have refinanced a loan, if I want lower payments, the duration of the loan is extended, can be five years, 10 years, etc. This information has not been included in my readings by the proponents of this bond passage.

If for example, this bond measure is passed, and the refinance extends the current bond for another five years, I personally will be paying an additional \$7,500 until the bond is ended. If extended for 10 more years, I will be paying an additional \$15,000. Now you say, well, it didn't raise your tax rate.

The enticing \$4 million grant that could be gained by the successful passage of an additional \$4 million from local taxpayers still results in adding \$4 million to the taxpayers. If the school district has a magic method for adding \$4 million through the passage of this bond, without raising tax rates and/or extending more years to the paying off of the bond, then we want to hear what that is, and we will all jump to get on that wagon.

**Phil Myer
La Grande**

We must work together to protect our liberties

I woke up today and it was raining — not mortar shells. The birds were singing — not air raid sirens.

Our children went to school — not fearful, misplaced or without a father.

We drove to work — not in a line of vehicles escaping, or no work at all.

I went to the grocery store — the shelves were full, not empty.

I came home, did some spring cleaning — I had a home to clean.

I fixed dinner for my family — I had a family that was safe and together.

We grumble and complain about this and that, but we aren't leaving a country we grew up in, raised our family in, believed in. Not knowing if we would ever be able to return, and if we did, what destruction we would have to rebuild.

We are spoiled Americans. May it never happen to us. May we stay vigilant and not let government take us over, because it could happen. Let's be strong, work together, not divided, and be thankful every day for what we have.

**Judi Richter
Elgin**

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