

Pay It Back?

Pay it forward? Just plan on paying.



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BY MARTY DAVIS

The unfortunate truth is that to quite a few there are as many reasons to vote against the Portland Public Schools bond and levy, Measures 26-121 and 26-122, as there are reasons to vote for them.

The combined measures will have a decided impact on the average Portland homeowner. And Portland, for many voters, is still far away from approaching a state of pre-recession fiscal well-being. For a city with an unemployment rate hovering in the 10 percent range, with water and sewer rates going through the roof and highest-ever fuel costs on the immediate horizon, the additional \$200-\$300 per year in taxes will be felt by many, painfully. Non-homeowners might think they're off the hook but the fact is that even renters will see higher costs as landlords simply raise rental rates to accommodate new and higher property taxes.

Other complaints about the measures focus on bloated administrative costs, unnecessary staffing levels and excessive waste, amid other hard-to-prove accusations. In many homes, complaining about waste in government has now replaced "Mommie" or "Daddy" as baby's first words. When pressed for specifics, most voters would have a hard time, citing only the predictable seven road crew workers watching the one guy with a shovel—said crew becoming the stereotype for government waste.

In our LGBTQ community, I most often hear or read the muttered complaint, "I don't

have children, why should I pay for schools?" Well, if you're reading this you likely went to school, probably a public school, and you know what? Someone paid for you to do so. In the simplest of terms, it's now time to pay it back. You are also paying it forward. You're paying for the education of people who will fill the jobs and provide the skills to keep the city, the county, the state running efficiently for many years to come. Education is the key to a performing and skilled workforce. A skilled and prepared workforce is key to a vital and thriving economy. A vital and thriving economy is key, as we have noted in its recent absence, to some pretty basic quality-of-life issues for a lot of people.

The fact is one way or another we are all going to pay for the quality of education produced by Portland public schools. We can pay with our wallets, while demanding accountability and standards of performance, or we can pay with our apathy—and get what we pay for that way.

There may be those who attempt to equate lack of marriage equality with taxing measures. Please don't. Your current inability to marry your same-sex partner in Portland has nothing to do with earthquake safety in the schools. Don't punish the students of today for the laws passed by their parents and grandparents yesterday.

Schools, students, youth and the gay and grey all have a place in this is-



sue of *Just Out*. Seldom are we able to showcase such wide age diversity as we are here. Our feature story focuses on Gay & Grey, and an increasingly visible segment of our LGBTQ community. Perhaps it's time to consider adding another color to our rainbow flag symbol, a glimmering, shiny slice of silver glory. We're here, we're queer, we're old! Get used to it! Wouldn't it be grand if Portland's Pride parade were led off by a full contingent of gay-and-greys, followed immediately by the youth of SMYRC? I'm seeing batons, I'm seeing pom-poms, I'm seeing our history lead our future through the streets of Downtown Portland. We've got elders in wheelchairs; we've got youth with energy to spare. It all sounds like a perfect match to me. I cannot tell you how much I would like to see this happen.

Everyone should consider coming to the Gay & Grey expo. It's pretty simple—if you're not old(er) today, you will be soon. It's rare that I can speak with such certainty about anything. Hope to see you there. JO

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