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Vote Yes on 20-182

Or get ready for 23,000 truants tagging your fence

I attended public schools in Eugene and received not just an adequate education, but a terrific education, from elementary through high school. Lucky me, I squeaked through the system before 1990's contentious Measure 5 kneecapped this state's educational funding.

Measure 5 established distribution limits on property taxes on real estate, and transferred the funding for schools from local government to the state level. Its proponents, those commercial business owners and developers who stood to benefit, hailed Measure 5 as an "equalizer" – all the way to the bank.

Now, finally, there's dialog in Salem about the failures of Measure 5. And as the Legislature bats around the idea of change, do we sit idly by and wait? No, we do what we can, as a town, to say "You know what, that didn't work, but while y'all are working this out, we've got kids that need to go to school, and schools that need to be able to teach."

Measure 20-182 doesn't attempt to fix 20 years of deep cuts to education. Instead, it simply asks the community – you and me – to restore school days and keep class sizes where they are. School days and class sizes. That's it.

But you don't have kids in the schools, you're on a fixed income, you don't want to pay for such piffle. OK, how about this scenario: When Eugene is known as a place with a four-day school week, when we are known for our classrooms stuffed to the capacity the fire marshal will allow, what will happen to our property values? Will we attract new businesses to our area? Will we retain professional families that pump dollars into the local economy?

See, I've run the numbers, and though Measure 20-182 will cost me about the same as the local daily paper, it's a bargain compared to the \$100 per day I'll have to spend on childcare for my two young kids for each of the proposed furlough days next year. Let's see, they're talking about up to 18 furlough days ... basic math ... That's almost \$2,000 smackers to have Katie the furloughed teen watch my furloughed kindergartener and fourth grader while I go to work. Hmm, "Citizens for Jobs" – do you mean babysitting jobs?

We had been scratching our heads about our family budget – how to pony up for furlough daycare – and then at City Club on Friday, the leading opponent to Measure 20-182, Jennifer Solomon, said "It takes a village to raise a child," and that really got me thinking.

So, I am wondering, Jennifer: Will you watch my kids?

And when you're looking after them, I'd really appreciate it if you could make sure they get their academics, you know, reading, writing, math, science, social studies, history, oh, and music and PE. They'll need breakfast and lunch (for many kids in our town, the breakfast and lunch they receive at school is their only reliable food source) and please provide adequate measures of their success in the forms of quizzes, tests, essays, wall charts, dioramas, etc. (But do your planning and grading on your own time. The kids are #!!)

Actually, come to think of it, I have a lot of friends who won't be able to work, either, unless we find someplace to watch all of our school-age kids on these furlough days. Hmm, what to do? Quit our jobs? Get fired? Do you know anyplace where I can work full time that doesn't mind me missing work one day every week? Can I work for you? Do you have on-site childcare?

How about this: If you're opposed to Measure 20-182, the least you can do is open your home or business to kids on furlough days. You can handle 35 elementary kids at a time, right? Or 50 high schoolers?

Measure 20-182 isn't about fancy programs or extras. It's about unlocking the doors to the school so that children can learn. That's why I am voting yes.

P.S. Oh, by the way, Jennifer, I almost forgot, we're gonna need to get your criminal background check.

Rachael Carnes is a working mother of two whose daily schedule is a precarious house of cards. When she is not doling out bunny crackers, she consults internationally on the subject of creativity and its impact on brain development. But, given the current climate, she is considering throwing that in the bin in favor of collecting bottles and using them to buy scratch-its.




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