

Shared Priorities

continued **▲** from front

funding for libraries into the future, restore recent cuts in library hours, and protect and restore programs for children, students, seniors and jobseekers.

Those against the new tax argue that Multnomah County has historically been very generous to the library. On a per resident basis, the opponents argue that the local library system costs taxpayers twice as much as library systems across the country. Another argument against a library district is that it will give permanent taxing authority to a group of unelected government employees who will no longer have to answer to voters.

If voters say yes to the Portland Public Schools measure, it will authorize \$482 million of general obligation bonds to upgrade schools. Franklin, Grant and Roosevelt High Schools, along with Faubion preK-8 school in northeast Portland, would get complete remodels. Other schools would benefit from upgrades to leaking roofs, strengthened against earthquakes, and provide for increased disability access. All middle school science classrooms

would be upgraded, and the district could repay previous capital cost loans.

The eight-year school bond would charge property owners \$1.10 per \$1,000 in assessed property value. For the owner of a home with \$150,000 in assessed value, that comes to about \$165 a year for eight years.

Portland Public Schools is the largest school district in Oregon with 78 schools and 47,000 students. More than half of the schools were built before 1940 and only two have been built within the last 30 years.

Those in favor of the school bond argue that it's time to re-invest in our city's schools. Backing the bond's suggested improvements, advocates say learning improves with better learning environments. Those against argue that new buildings are no guarantee to student success.

The current average graduation rate for PPS schools is 62 percent and nearly half of graduates fall below standardized math and reading skills. Critics say the school district should close and consolidate low-enrollment schools, so remaining schools become stronger.

The Art Income Tax would levy a \$35 tax per year on all city residents with exceptions of those individuals living below the federal poverty

level. Estimated to raise annual funds of \$12 million, the new tax will pay to hire more arts and music teachers for kindergarten through 5th grade in the Portland, Centennial, David Douglas, Reynolds and Riverdale school districts. The tax monies would be administered by the Regional Arts and Cultural Council.

Supporters point to the steep decline in arts and music programs in Portland Public Schools. In just two years, PPS dropped all arts instruction in 22 schools. Advocates say this measure ensures every Portland elementary student receives an arts education, which has proven to help children reach their full potential, raise test scores,

graduation rates and college admittance.

Only 18 percent of Portland elementary schools provide art instruction compared to 83 percent nationally, and 58 percent of PPS schools provide music education compared to 94 percent nationally.

Those against the Art Income Tax see it unfairly impacting people who are financially struggling, stay-at-home-spouses and college students. City Commissioner-elect Steve Novick has called the proposed tax regressive.

Overall, combining the tax measures for schools, libraries and the arts represent an 8 to 9 percent increase over last year's average property tax bill, officials said.



PHOTO BY CARI HACHMANN/THE PORTLAND OBSERVER

Courtney Dixon and her three daughters check out books and do homework at the Multnomah County Library at North Killingsworth Street and Commercial Avenue. Dixon said most nights they have to hustle or they wouldn't make the library's reduced closing time of 5 p.m. Before budget cuts, the library closed at 8 p.m. If voters pass the Permanent Library District Tax in November, Multnomah County libraries will return to their extended hours.



Come Out for Our Families!

We believe all our families have so much in common: we struggle to access healthy food, quality education, affordable healthcare, and housing. Our families also face discrimination that prevents us from thriving in our workplaces and our neighborhoods. As families of color, we experience unique challenges as we work to keep our homes, our jobs, and our health.

These struggles affect Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered (LGBT) families of color in very unique ways. LGBT families of color are part of the fabric of our community and members of our own families.

Unfortunately, some of our LGBT family members do not feel our community's full support. So, in honor of National Coming Out Day, we are coming out as friends, family and public allies of LGBT families of color. We believe our communities are strongest when all families - extended families, multi-generational families, single-parent families and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender families - have the resources, respect and love they need to thrive.

We believe it's time to come out in support of all our families. Join us!

Alliance of Minority Chambers
Causa Oregon

Farmworker Housing Development Corporation
Latino Network

Lewis & Clark Law School

Native American Youth and Family Center
Northwest Health Foundation

Oregon Action

Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste (PCUN) Oregon's Farmworker Union

Portland African American Leadership Forum

Portland Japanese American Citizens League

Portland State University

Urban League of Portland

(All other organizations listed for affiliation purposes only.)

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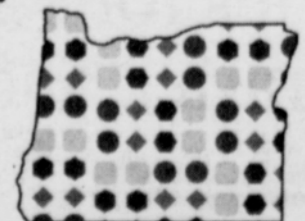
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A project of Basic Rights Oregon

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