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a Better Future Now”

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BRIAN STIMSON
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DAVID KIDD
Graphic Designer

MONICA J. FOSTER
Seattle Office Coordinator

JULIE KEEFE
SUSAN FRIED
Photographers



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No on Portland School Measures

Who doesn’t want to support education? Who isn’t shocked by the bad repair of public schools in Portland?

And now the big question: Who can afford another \$700-\$1,200 in property taxes every year for the next six years? Because that’s how passage of the Portland schools levy and bond measure would hit households and businesses if they are both approved by voters next week.

Costing \$2 per \$1,000 per assessed value, Portland School District Measures 26-121 and 26-122 dwarf other levy proposals we’ve seen in recent years. The Portland firefighter levy last year was 13 cents per \$1,000; the Oregon Zoo levy in 2008, 9 cents; the Portland Community College levy was a whopping 35.5

FROM THE
PUBLISHER

Bernie Foster



the firings illegal – the two funding measures now on the ballot are like a slap in the face to homeowners in a down economy.

As The Oregonian PolitiFact analysis showed last year, <http://www.politifact.com/oregon/statements/2010/nov/23/carole-smith/portland-schools-superintendent-carole-smith-says/> Superintendent Carole Smith’s claim that the measure would “impact” 40 percent of all students is simply incorrect. The district says it want to

spend the nearly half a billion dollars in new taxes on complete rebuilds of Cleveland, Jefferson and Roosevelt High Schools – but together these schools only represent 23 percent of

We argued over the size of some of those measures at the time – but \$2?

cents. We argued over the size of some of those measures at the time – but \$2?

For a school district that has earned so much public distrust of its financial decisions – such as firing the entire janitorial staff to save \$4.5 million and then paying more than \$10 million a few years later when the Oregon Supreme Court ruled

the district’s student population. The Oregonian’s PolitiFact Truth-O-Meter gave Smith a “Pants on Fire” rating for claims made during the funding measures rollout last November.

The district’s sketchy financial pitch for the levy and bond measures underscores what’s wrong with how the school district relates to taxpayers and families. Bringing out the

largest bond measure in Oregon history – on the heels of a string of other funding measures brought by desperate local agencies – seems tailored to appeal to upper-income professionals at the expense of regular taxpaying homeowners who are watching to price of gas, groceries and insurance skyrocket.

Considering that the state’s unemployment benefits expansion this week is already set to be wiped out early by the unprecedented demand of jobless workers, we simply can’t believe the Portland Public Schools could be so tone-deaf to its own community.

One more thing: The Portland district is one of the biggest property owners in Portland. A facilities management audit released in 2008 showed the district owned six ‘vacant’ properties; the report was titled, “Effort Needed to Improve the Capability of School Facility Maintenance Services.”

Sell your vacant property, PPS. If you did, ironically, then those properties could be taxed to contribute to your own operations budget.

Who doesn’t want to support the schools? Who doesn’t want all our children to have the best educational facilities we can afford?

But the bottom line here was

we simply can’t believe the Portland Public Schools could be so tone-deaf to its own community

stated best by New York gubernatorial candidate Jimmy McMillan of the Rent is Too Damn High Party:

Portland School District Measures 26-121 and 26-122 are too damned high. Vote no on both and send the district back to come up with solutions that won’t tax us out of our homes and businesses.

What do you think?

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