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OUR VIEW

Voters should support M-F schools bond

Milton-Freewater voters have turned down opportunities to build new schools more than once. But this May, voters would be foolish to say no again.

If they do, millions of dollars in grants and non-local funding sources would disappear, leaving the large burden of constructing new facilities and repairing aging buildings entirely on local taxpayers.

Briefly, here is what Milton-Freewater Unified School District would do, were the bond to pass:

- Gib Olinger Elementary, a 75,000-square-foot school teaching kindergarten through third grade, will be built on school district land locally known as “the cannery.” That old warehouse will be demolished and the school, which will include a gymnasium and outdoor ballfields, will be built at the site.

- Freewater and Grove elementary schools will be vacated. They could be demolished, or possibly one turned into community space, depending on financial viability.

- Ferndale School will be repurposed into a grade 4-5 facility. \$200,000 will be spent on upgrades and repairs.

- Grove Sports Complex will be built, consisting of soccer fields and a walking path, as well as bleachers, concession stand and restrooms.

- \$1 million HVAC upgrades to McLoughlin High School.

- Bus/maintenance yard will be relocated from the high school to a site still to be determined.

It’s a long list, the cost of which comes in about \$31.5 million. Yet taxpayers, if they vote for the bond in May, would only have to pick up \$12.5 million of the cost.

That’s because of grants and gifts the school district has wrangled —

all of which are contingent on local voters agreeing to throw in their share.

The Valley Foundation (created by Gladys Valley, a 1925 Mac-Hi graduate) has pledged \$15 million to the effort. That foundation, which has supported numerous Milton-Freewater projects in the past, will sunset in 2018. This is likely the last time this money will be available.

In addition, the school district would receive \$4 million from the Oregon School Capital Improvement Matching Program.

Those are two pretty good gifts, allowing Milton-Freewater voters to get their schools upgraded at a 72 percent discount.

And upgrading schools is important. Milton-Freewater is surrounded by districts who have already done so: Walla Walla has. Pendleton is building new schools right now. Hermiston is constantly looking to expand facilities to keep up with exploding enrollment.

To compete for working families, the residents that give small towns their vitality, Milton-Freewater must invest in its schools.

Now is the time to do so.

Outside investors want to throw \$19 million into the school district’s account. But in order to collect, the district needs an OK from voters.

The cost to those voters is not nil, but it is minimal. Homeowners with a house valued at \$100,000 would see their taxes rise by roughly \$110 a year if the bond passes. That means that for less than \$10 a month for many taxpayers, Milton-Freewater voters would get a brand new school and close some of their most inefficient, outdated ones.

It’s a good deal for voters, and for Milton-Freewater students.

Outside investors want to throw \$19 million in the school district’s account.

Unsigned editorials are the opinion of the East Oregonian editorial board of Publisher Kathryn Brown, Managing Editor Daniel Wattenburger, and Opinion Page Editor Tim Trainor. Other columns, letters and cartoons on this page express the opinions of the authors and not necessarily that of the East Oregonian.



OTHER VIEWS

The movement mentality

It feels like more people clumped themselves into intellectual movements 30 years ago than they do today. There were paleoconservatives and neoconservatives. There were modernists and postmodernists; liberals, realists, and neoliberals; communitarians and liberation theologians; Jungians and Freudians; Straussians and deconstructionists; feminists and post-feminists; Marxists and democratic socialists. Maybe there were even some transcendentalists, existentialists, pragmatists, agrarians and Gnostics floating around.

Now people seem less likely to gather in intellectual clumps. Now public thinkers seem to be defined more by their academic discipline (economist or evolutionary biologist) or by their topic (race and gender), than by their philosophic school or a shared vision for transforming society.

The forces of individualism that are sweeping through so much of society are also leading to the atomization of intellectual life. Eighty years ago engaged students at City College in New York sat in the cafeteria hour upon hour, debating. The Trotskyites sat in one alcove and the Leninists sat in another, and since the Trotskyites were smarter and won the debates, the leaders of the Leninist faction eventually forbade their cadres from ever talking to them.

But today we live in a startup culture. There’s great prestige in being the founder of something, the lone entrepreneur who creates something new. Young people who frequently say they don’t want to work in some large organization are certainly not going to want to subsume themselves in some pre-existing intellectual label.

The Internet has changed things, too. Writers used to cluster around magazines that were the hubs of movements. On the Internet, individual posters and tweeters are more distinct, but collectives of thinkers are less common.

The odd thing is that it was easier to come to maturity when there were more well-defined philosophical groups. When there was a choice of self-conscious social movements, a young person could try them on like clothing at the mall: be an existentialist one year and then join a Frankfurt School clique the next. This was a structured way to find a philosophy of life, a way of looking at the world, an identity.

Eventually you found what fit, made a wager, joined a team and assented to a belief system that was already latent within you. When I joined National Review at age 24 I joined a very self-conscious tradition. I was connected to a history of insight and belief; to Edmund Burke and Whittaker Chambers



DAVID BROOKS
Comment

and James Burnham. I wanted to learn everything I could about that tradition — what I accepted and what I rejected — as a way to figure out what I believed.

When you join a movement — whether it is deconstructionist, feminist or Jungian — you join a community, which can sometimes feel like family in ways good and bad. You have a common way of seeing the world, which you want to share with everyone. When you join, people are always pressing books into your hands.

Believing becomes an activity. People in movements take stands, mobilize for common

causes, hold conferences, fight and factionalize and build solidarity. (I remember late night at one conference dancing near four generations of anti-communists.)

There are opportunity structures for young people to rise and contribute. First you set out the chairs for the meetings; later you get to lead the meetings. Young people find that none of the

mentors is perfect, so they can’t be completely loyal to any particular leader, but they can be loyal to the enterprise as a whole, because it embodies some real truth and is stumbling toward some real good.

The whole process arouses the passions. Today universities teach “critical thinking” — to be detached, skeptical and analytic. Movements are marked by emotion — division and solidarity, victory and defeat.

There are fervent new converts, and traitors who “break ranks.” There are furious debates over strategy; the future design of society is at stake. There are inevitably love affairs and breakups. People learn ardently, with their hearts.

As in any love, there’s an idealistic early phase, then a period of disillusionment, and then, hopefully, a period of longer and more stable commitment to the ideas. The movement shapes one’s inner landscape. It offers a way to clarify the world; a bunch of books to consult if you need to think through some problem.

Of course there is often rigidity and groupthink, but people can also be smarter when thinking in groups. For example, movements pool imagination. It’s very hard to come up with a vision so compelling that it can provide a unifying purpose to your life. But such visions emerge in a movement collectively, and then get crystallized by a leader like Martin Luther King.

It all depends on taking steps that are less in fashion today: committing to a collective, accepting a label, keeping faith, surrendering self to a tradition that stretches beyond you in time.

David Brooks became a New York Times Op-Ed columnist in September 2003.

The forces of individualism ... are also leading to the atomization of intellectual life.

YOUR VIEWS

Hermiston overdue for funding fire district

I am proud to be a part of this amazing community. As a nurse, I care deeply about the health of our community.

I feel our priorities have tragically shifted. In November 2014 our community voted against the reformation to combine Stanfield and Hermiston fire districts. Whatever the reason for the reformation failing, you should know the hard facts: My life, your life, and your loved ones lives are worth much more.

Before 2014, Hermiston Fire and Emergency Services had not proposed a tax increase in 66 years. In 1950, the price of a gallon of gas was 27 cents. You pay 142 percent more for gas, yet nothing more for the fire protection and emergency response of this community.

The population of Hermiston in 1950 was 3,804. Today, the population is 17,107.

However, Hermiston Fire does not just cover emergencies in Hermiston. They also cover all ambulance calls in Stanfield, Umatilla and Echo, as well as serving as the automatic mutual aid for all fires in Umatilla and Stanfield.

In the last 66 years, Hermiston

Fire has gone from responding to the emergencies of 3,804 citizens to the emergencies of 26,862 citizens. It is unrealistic to think they have survived this without consequences.

There have been consequences due to their drastic need for more funding. There are approximately 104 delays a year. As an emergency department nurse in a busy Tri-Cities hospital, I have seen firsthand how every second counts. Our heroes are stretched, short staffed and exhausted. They are working with a cardiac monitor that is older than the first iPhone. Only one of the three available stations is staffed.

The National Fire Protection Association recommends that a station be staffed with at least 13 personnel. Comparable fire districts staff at least 17 personnel during a 24 hour period. Hermiston Fire currently is only able to staff seven personnel per 24-hour shift and often must go down to five.

At this point, the Hermiston/Stanfield Fire District reformation vote in May is no longer a political issue or an issue of opinion. It is an issue of ethics. It is time to let our actions speak louder than our words. Our words cannot save lives and provide desperately needed funds to our community. However,

our actions can.

As a nurse and fellow human being, I implore you to consider the repercussions of your vote this May.

Ashley Smith
Hermiston

Rubio unfit Republican presidential candidate

Republican presidential candidate Florida Sen. Marco Rubio was a leading member of the “Gang of Eight,” which worked and voted for the passage of Senate Bill 744 (S.744) in 2013, a bill they termed “comprehensive immigration reform,” but which was actually a wide-sweeping amnesty to illegal immigrants that contained only weak promises for future law enforcement of the country’s immigration laws. The bill all but ignored the past and present illicit activities and criminal conduct of illegal immigrants currently in the country.

Just three years ago, Sen. Rubio showed he was willing to overlook the criminal activities of 11.3 million illegal immigrants who may have committed crimes and misdemeanors like identity theft, Social Security fraud, overstaying visas and illegal employment.

Fortunately for national security and the public safety of all Americans, the Gang of Eight’s amnesty attempt went no further than the U.S. Senate because citizens across the country pressured the U.S. House of Representatives not to consider the bill.

Last month, on January 17, presidential candidate Rubio reminded Americans of his support for amnesty for criminal immigrants while being interviewed by Chuck Todd on NBC’s “Meet the Press.”

A politician to the core, Sen. Rubio said in the interview with Todd that illegal immigrants who were felons would not be granted amnesty while those immigrants who had committed only “immigration crimes” would not be excluded from receiving amnesty.

What might be said of Rubio’s “Meet the Press” interview is that he purposely didn’t reveal there

are some “immigration crimes,” like repeat illegal entry into the country and document fraud, that do constitute felony crimes.

Recent U.S. Federal Bureau of Prisons inmate statistics indicate there are 17,354 federal prisoners incarcerated for immigration offenses, 9.4 percent of the federal prison population.

The federal prison system incarcerates at least 34,806 foreign national inmates; they are at a minimum 17.7 percent of the federal government’s prison inmates.

As 2016 presidential primary elections occur across our nation, American voters who rejected Sen. Marco Rubio’s 2013 amnesty bill for illegal immigrants should reject his bid to become the Republican candidate for President of the United States.

David Olen Cross
Salem

LETTERS POLICY

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