

Siuslaw News
P.O. Box 10
Florence, OR 97439

Opinion

LETTERS

Appreciate public service

May 1 through 7 is Public Service Recognition Week. Across the country and in communities like Florence, federal, state, county and local government employees serve us every day.

Please join me in publicly acknowledging the good work done by the active and retired federal workers in Oregon.

At a time when much of the talk about federal employees is biased or uninformed, let's use this week to talk about what federal employees really do.

They work alongside our military at home and abroad to defend our country. They conduct cutting-edge research to improve health and prevent disease. They regulate food and drug products to keep us safe. And, when natural disasters strike, they are there to provide relief and help us rebuild.

Despite popular belief, 85 percent of federal employees work outside of Washington, D.C. All around this country, federal employees help seniors get their Social Security benefits, guide airplanes safely through our skies and care for our veterans and wounded warriors.

During Public Service Recognition Week, please join me in recognizing the important work of the public employees in our community and thanking them for their service.

Jim Parrish
NARFE Siuslaw Chapter 1751, Florence



lion for necessary upgrades. Get real!

Thanks to Oregon for the \$4 million, but for us property owners to shovel in another \$36 million, what's the return for that money?

If the bond passes, we will look for an increase in the graduation rates and all the economic development. If this does not happen, I told you so!

Eric Pearson
Florence

Uncertain about bond

I have been reading about the proposed school bond for the new high school here in Florence and was feeling like a yes vote for this community need until I considered the political/taxation situation beyond our small town.

I thought about proposed tax increases, which could effect all our budgets in the future. These could include tax increases to pay for free college for everyone, free medical care for everyone and new carbon taxation, which increase the costs of all kinds of things like food, transportation, gasoline and electricity.

Florence was just voted one of the most beautiful towns in America. That's great, but as property values increase so do property taxes. Add to that possible new taxes to pay for campaign reform and new taxes on Wall Street financial transactions (which could impact retirement/401-K plans or pension plans, like PERS returns/unfunded liabilities) and suddenly my yearly budget becomes anything but certain.

And, uncertainty leads to caution. So when I think about this long-term bond issue (a debt obligation I take very seriously as a taxed, fixed income property owner) to make sure I can pay it within my budget, I look at it as a small piece of all federal, state and local taxes and expenses I am responsible for.

So if I vote no, it's not because I'm against a new high school. It's everything else. Politicians should think about that before proposing grand plans that someone else must pay for.

Dave Peck
Florence

Enough is enough

Vote no on the school bond measure. As a frustrated home owner, 60 percent of the property taxes go to the schools.

Graduation rates — Oregon rates second worst in the nation and Siuslaw School District second worst in Lane County. How is a new \$40 million school building going to improve those results?

Shame on the mayor and city council for endorsing this bond measure. We all live on the coast, if a major earthquake and/or tsunami should occur, who's going to go to school anytime soon?

The school exterior, grounds and athletic fields look beautiful. It does not take \$40 mil-

In favor of school bond

Yes, it's a lot of money, and no, I'm not a rich person. I have to balance my bills with my declining income. But, we all know building costs do not go down, only up. You can fix an old truck for just so long before you have to replace it or only get used to walking a lot.

Have you ever been at home in an earthquake where floors crack, exit doors jam and ceiling fixtures fall? No one who has lived in Florence all their lives has experienced even a 5.8 earthquake, and we are told to "expect an 8.7 or greater earthquake lasting up to five minutes, at any time." A magnitude 8.7 is 794 times bigger than a 5.8 quake as measured on seismograms, but the 8.7 quake is about 23,000 times stronger than the 5.8 earthquake.

The Siuslaw School District is above the potential tsunami line, but we are all living on sand. The new high school design will be a stabilized building and it can be built on the same property and be fully functional as the old school is dismantled.

Sooner or later the kids we love need to be in safe, up to code schools, and it should be as soon as possible. It's difficult to learn in cramped, airless, upstairs classrooms.

If you have volunteered at Siuslaw High School, did you see they had no kitchen or cafeteria, that girls sat on the rough cement floor in a corner of the upstairs hall to eat food from home, that there was limited space and seating so some did not eat at all?

Did you see there was no safe way for a disabled person to get upstairs? Restrooms and the gym are near the main building, library space is doubled up as classrooms, office space for staff is limited with inadequate heating, cooling systems and fire suppression. Power supplies are maxed out and not all students have personal laptops and tablets for studies. The old SHS is past its "sell by" date.

Students need help to stay in school long enough to graduate. A high school diploma is the basic tool to get a job or enlist. Staying in high school to get one year of college work done and earn certification in a trade means a job starting at \$20 an hour.

Leaving school with no skills or a high school diploma can mean years of minimum wage job hopping with no benefits and raising a young family.

Our dedicated teachers are doing the best they can to give your children a chance to do

their best to have a good start in life. A good start for a good job and a secure future.

Please review the "Just the Facts" document with details on the upcoming bond measure and visit the website <http://safesmartchools.wix.com/bond> for more information.

Jenny Velinty
Florence

Protect our children

I take exception to the fact that the only information that seems relevant to Mr. James McCoe ("Vote 'No' on School Bond," April 20) is financial. The safety of our young people is obviously of secondary (if even that) importance to Mr. McCoe and others who are as shortsighted.

The high school is not safe for two crucial reasons.

Firstly, it will be a death trap if an earthquake should strike while our students are in school. People that keep their heads out of the sand know that we are overdue for a serious quake resulting from the Juan de Fuca Plate subducting under the Continental North American plate in the Cascadia Subduction Zone. Although more severe north of us, devastating damage is expected to occur all along the coast.

Secondly, inherent in the high school design is an openness that was appropriate circa 1970 but is far from optimal in our current society. As more and more schools fall prey to violent gun crimes being committed on campus and children and youths being murdered, it is time to have a high school designed with security as a priority. It won't happen here? I am sure schools where attacks occurred wish they could go back in time and address security issues.

So, yes, it is a matter of money. A matter of citizens voting to pay more in their taxes in order to protect our most valuable resource, our youth. That is what direct elections are all about; letting people voice their desires and concerns.

A little more money in your pocket or safety for our students? Doesn't seem much of a contest to me, and no, I am not wealthy.

Cris Reep
Florence

A safe school

May ballots to Florence-area voters will soon be in our hands, giving us an opportunity to vote on District 97J's bond issue to construct a new Siuslaw High School. Because the district has worked diligently to maintain the school, it looks good. In reality, the building looks good but performs poorly.

Siuslaw High School was built in the pre-digital era, before computers entered the classroom, before energy costs drove us toward double-pane windows and well-insulated roofs

and walls, before accessibility was mandated, before building security and safety included lockdowns, before the building code anticipated the probability of a significant earthquake and tsunami in our area.

Like many buildings of its era, Siuslaw High School was constructed as a slab on grade building with a relatively shallow foundation. All the building's loads transfer to a foundation inadequate to resist the forces emanating from a strong earthquake.

It would require an enormously expensive effort to now attempt bigger foundations under the existing building as well as to install all the needed connectors for structural integrity from roof framing and walls to foundation throughout the school. Its vulnerability to structural failure explains why our high school is not a designated place for refuge in the event of a disaster.

A host of age-related conditions also make the Siuslaw High School expensive to maintain and operate as well as inadequate for the educational curriculum and student needs. It is OK to love the school, but we need to be realistic about the economics of trying to maintain a building that has many severe shortcomings.

Maintenance and repair costs take increasingly larger chunks from the school budget while students and teachers endure environments that, depending on the particulars, can be too small, too hot, too cold, too disrupted by noise. The problem with remodeling is that what is in place must often be removed or torn apart and then replaced, refinished and re-installed — a more labor-intensive process than simply building new.

A major remodel (the big BandAid approach) could cost 70 percent to 75 percent of new construction. Remodeling would not provide the benefits of a more functional plan, all new construction, new materials and new warranties. Major remodeling would also involve displacing students to portables for a year or more at an estimated cost of \$500,000 to \$1 million.

Some are asking, "If the school isn't safe, why isn't the school district doing something about it?" We voters, our neighbors, our children are this school district. It is up to us to recognize the advantages of a new building.

If the school's bond issue passes in May, \$4 million in grant money from the State of Oregon will help us pay for about 10 percent of a new building. If the bond fails, the \$4 million will go to some other district.

Now is the right time to build a new school that addresses important design and operational concerns, but first and foremost is safe for our students and community.

Sandra Sampson Jones
Florence

A burden on seniors

Wow — just outrageous amounts of money Siuslaw is asking for a brand new high school and such a huge burden on taxpayers.

And, as always, the heaviest financial burden is on seniors, who struggle to get by on fixed incomes without reasonable social security, cost-of-living increases, etc.

Why can't the school system work within a budget like the rest of us are forced to? Yes, maybe a new school gets built, but a lot of the monies will go to adding more "staff" and perks as most bureaucracies do with budget increases.

Vote no on any/all tax increases like this on May 17.

Ralph Wagnitz
Florence

Editor's Note: According to the Siuslaw School District's Bond Measure FAQ sheet, if any bond funds remain after construction of a new high school, the district will focus on safety and security upgrades in all district facilities, technology and curriculum upgrades for K-12, and energy efficiency improvements at the elementary and middle schools.

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John Bartlett	Publisher, ext. 327
Jenna Bartlett	General Manager, ext. 318
Ryan Cronk	Editor, ext. 313
Susan Gutierrez	Advertising Director, ext. 326
Cathy Dietz	Office Supervisor, ext. 312
Ron Annis	Production Supervisor
Jeremy Gentry	Press Manager

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR POLICY

The Siuslaw News welcomes letters to the editor concerning issues affecting the Florence area and Lane County. Emailed letters are preferred. Handwritten or typed letters must be signed.

All letters should be limited to about 300 words and must include the writer's full name, address and phone number for verification. Letters are subject to editing for length, grammar and clarity.

Publication of any letter is not guaranteed and depends on space available and the volume of letters received. Libelous and anonymous letters as well as poetry will not be published. All submissions become the property of Siuslaw News and will not be returned.

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