

# Opinion

BAKER CITY  
**Herald**  
Serving Baker County since 1870

**Write a letter**  
news@bakercityherald.com

EDITORIAL

## Study the tax bond

The Baker School Board has made official what for months has seemed all but assured — it will ask voters in the Nov. 6 election to approve a \$48 million property tax bond measure to build a new elementary school, remodel Baker High School to accommodate seventh- and eighth-graders in a separate area, and make other improvements to district schools.

We say “all but assured” mainly because we didn’t think the board, after the district and two committees had invested so much time and effort over the past 2½ years in assessing the district’s current buildings and space needs, was likely to scrap the bond proposal rather than forward it to the district’s approximately 9,700 voters.

It was the right choice.

Considering that 70 years have passed since voters approved a bond measure for school construction in the district, and that both Brooklyn Primary and South Baker Intermediate are housing more students than they were designed for, and Baker High School considerably fewer, it’s a logical time for the board to take the matter to voters.

This is a complicated issue, to be sure. And the measure, were it to pass, would create a significant financial commitment for property owners over the next 30 years.

The district and its committees have assembled a trove of information about building capacities, ages and limitations, and we urge voters to read those documents before ballots are mailed in October.

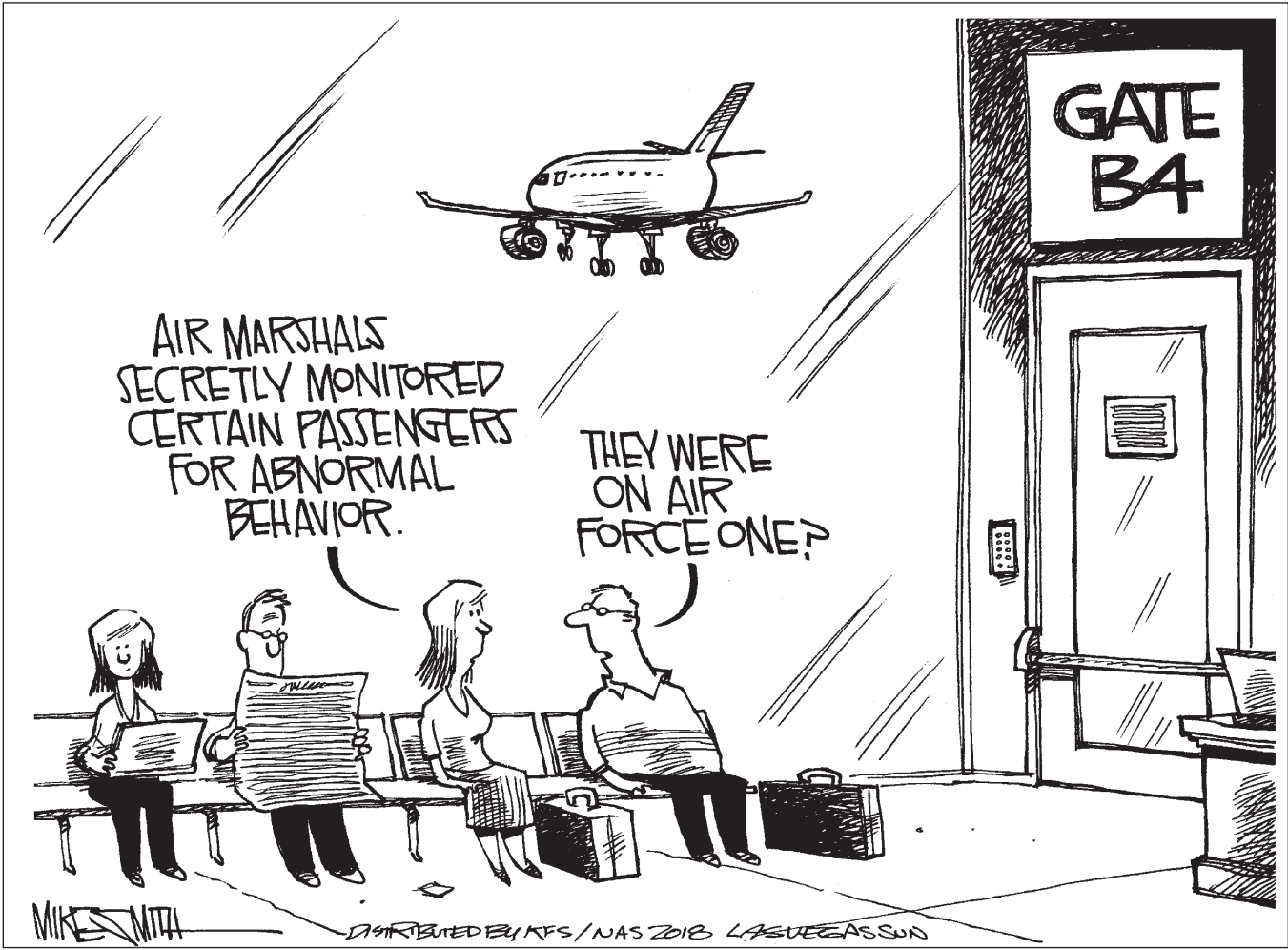
We’ll be doing the same — even though we’ve been covering this topic from the start — to help inform a future editorial giving our opinion about whether or not we support the measure.

This is potentially a milestone in Baker City’s history, one that guides our public education system for at least the next 50 years, and, considering the age of the current schools, quite possibly longer.

We think voters owe it to themselves, and to the school district, to devote time to understanding the details of the district’s plans before casting their ballots this fall.

The district expects to post the information on its website, <https://www.baker5j.org/>, by about Aug. 8.

*From the Baker City Herald editorial board. The board consists of editor Jayson Jacoby and reporter Chris Collins.*



## Your views

### Veterans with PTSD shouldn't have gun rights restricted

Mass shootings have sparked a national debate on how to keep firearms out of the hands of those who might go on a rampage. At the same time veterans’ suicides occur at the rate of about 22 per day. I’ve cautioned before that attempts to stop this should be well reasoned out. A knee-jerk reaction has happened just as I predicted. The July issue of the DAV, Disabled American Veteran, magazine has an article, “Caught in the Crossfire,” that should cause outrage. To quote, “in 1998, the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco and Firearms adopted a new procedure that defined ‘mental defective’ to include someone who lacks the mental capacity to contract or manage their own affairs due to injury or disease.”

“For veterans, this means that if a veteran is mentally incompetent and appoints a fiduciary, a prohibiting record is created and sent to the FBI. The FBI enters the veteran’s record in the National Instant Criminal Background Check System, which contains names of people who are flagged and access to firearms restricted.

“As of the start of 2017, federal agencies had contributed 171,083 records to the system’s index under the new provision enacted by the ATF.”

“The VA contributed 98.1 percent of those, or 167,815.”

It’s a four-page article, much too long

for a daily paper, but in a nutshell, if you are a veteran who has served in combat and suffer from PTSD you will have to decide to get help and see a VA mental health provider and lose your gun rights or try to beat it on your own.

I’ve said it before, the VA should be prohibited from adding names of those who used a firearm in defense of the country to any gun banning list and the ATF agents should be encouraged to get a real job with the border patrol.

**Steve Culley**  
*Baker City*

### Watching usable items going to waste in the landfill

We don’t like taking anything to the dump or (an oxymoron if there ever was one) “sanitary landfill” but sometimes it is unavoidable. We scatter our cut grass and fallen leaves around the yard and garden the best we can as mulch and/or a way to stifle unwanted growing things. We try to recycle, compost, reuse and repurpose to the best of our ability but sadly and inevitably we find ourselves with a pickup load of branches, weeds or just plain old accumulated worthless crap at least two or three times a year.

We have never made a trip to any dump, transfer station, landfill ... where we have not seen something discarded that we desperately wanted to rescue. Baker’s landfill is no exception but,

as the signs proclaim, “No Salvaging Allowed.” We have always found this policy (at any dump) totally unacceptable, if not downright ridiculous. Being involved in recycled art only intensifies our desire to change this confusing policy.

A week or so ago we made one of those trips to our local landfill. As we were emptying our cans of yard debris a little truck with a trailer backed in next to us. We watched in shock as two adult size mountain bikes and a small child’s bike were tossed from the trailer. They appeared in fine shape, they had all their wheels, tires, seats ... even with problems the parts alone were worth salvaging. These were promptly buried in an assortment of reusable wooden boards and topped off with a couple of intact sliding windows (would’ve been perfect for the top of homemade cold frames!) We watched helplessly as the bulldozer combined it with the rest of the rubble and waste. We couldn’t help pointing out, to each other, all the other reusable treasures destined to become a part of the landscape. We understand liability is the concern. We would be the first to sign any release, waiver, contract ... and follow all rules. Seems senseless to bury things others could use. Maybe have a certain day or even just an hour? Think about it. Peace to all.

**Barb and Mike Meyer**  
*Baker City*

GUEST EDITORIAL

### Editorial from The (Bend) Bulletin:

Oregon’s public records law could be getting some changes in the next legislative session. Ginger McCall, the state’s public records advocate, supports holding state agencies and other Oregon public bodies more accountable.

The proposal is to require public bodies to keep a list of public records requests, track their progress and make that information available to the public. It’s an improvement that could give the public a better way to see how well the public records law works.

Many public agencies already do something like it. For instance, Deschutes County has kept a log. Gov. Kate Brown’s office posts a log on its website. A formalized change in the public records law could make a log a requirement, specify the information that must be tracked and compel the posting of the information on a website.

We have experienced a striking variability between public agencies in records requests. Some of it is related to the information requested. If the information is going to be “good news,” they can’t wait to get it to you. If there’s a hint that an agency may have done something wrong, we’ve learned to expect delays or legal fees that will make the request prohibitive.

Public records tracking could also specifically expose how well agencies are complying with a new requirement: Public bodies are supposed to acknowledge requests in five business days and supply the documents within 10 business days of that acknowledgment. When we requested documents from the Oregon Department of Human Services earlier this year related to its foster care program, the agency failed to supply the documents within 10 days of the acknowledgment. We requested the documents and received an acknowledgment on May 21. We received the documents on July 5. Internal emails show DHS did not want to release the memo it wrote that answered our questions. There’s some government transparency!

The change in the law that McCall supports won’t prevent things like that from happening. It might make it more clear when agencies do it.

# 2017 tax cut benefits everyone

### ADAM MICHEL

Last year’s tax reform is benefiting Americans twice. First, from paying less in taxes, and second from a bigger economy that results in higher incomes.

That’s not just wishful thinking. We’ve run the numbers. The average American household can expect an additional \$26,000 in take-home pay over the next 10 years. For a family of four? Just shy of \$45,000.

That’s more than enough for a new car, a year of college tuition, or part of a down payment on a house.

New research I recently completed with Kevin Dayaratna and Parker Sheppard from The Heritage Foundation measures the benefits of the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act in every congressional district across America. Using IRS data, we look beyond the national average and find that typical taxpayers in every congressional district and in every state get a tax cut this year. Every district also sees higher take-home pay over the next 10 years due to the bigger economy.

In short, this doesn’t just benefit the rich, or those in “red” states. It benefits everyone.

You may have noticed part of your tax cut already, as your employer has started deducting less from your paycheck this year. The average American household can expect to pay about \$1,400 less in taxes in 2018. But depending on where you live and how many kids you have, the numbers can look different.

In communities that had high tax bills last year, such as Palo Alto, California’s,

18th Congressional District, represented by Anna Eschoo, or New York City’s 12th district, represented by Carolyn Maloney, the average tax cut could be as much as \$3,000.

Lower-income communities, such as Arizona’s 7th district near Phoenix, represented by Ruben Gallego, and New York’s 15th district in the South Bronx, represented by Jose Serrano, will see much larger percentage decreases in their tax bills.

Tax reform befitted these communities by cutting their income taxes by as much as a third. By this measure, lower-income communities tend to see the largest reductions in their tax bills.

Americans with children will also benefit tremendously from the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act. A married couple filing jointly with two children will see their tax bills fall by \$2,917, on average.

The tax cuts, however, will have much larger effects than just letting Americans keep more of their money. Since tax reform passed, Americans for Tax Reform has counted more than 650 companies that have announced more jobs, larger bonuses, higher wages, charitable giving and new investments in the U.S. All of them have explicitly cited the tax cuts as the reason for the bonuses and investments.

Nationally, businesses are in the midst

of the longest-running trend of adding jobs to the U.S. economy in our history. For the first time since we started counting this type of thing, there are more jobs available than people looking for them.

Because it is easier to find, more people are looking for work, relying less on unemployment, and supporting themselves. In the coming years, the tax cuts will continue to support more jobs, raise wages and expand economic opportunities. Economists across the board agree that the economy is fundamentally strong, and a strong economy means higher wages.

But the future of tax cuts is not so certain. Many of them expire after 2025, and some in Congress are determined to repeal them well before then. If the tax cuts are made permanent, the benefits over the next 10 years will be even bigger and will continue to compound for years to come. The reverse is also true. If tax cuts are rolled back, the benefits will shrink or go away entirely.

The Tax Cuts and Jobs Act was a landmark achievement to lower America’s taxes and update our broken system that pushed jobs overseas. Making the tax cuts permanent is crucially important for our well-being. To protect our paychecks, Congress must make our tax cuts permanent.

*Adam Michel is a policy analyst specializing in tax issues in the Institute for Economic Freedom at The Heritage Foundation.*

