

## Letters to the Editor

*Editor's note: Letters to the Editor must be signed. The Gazette-Times will not publish unsigned letters. Please include your address and phone number on all letters for use by the G-T office. The G-T reserves the right to edit. The G-T is not responsible for accuracy of statements made in letters.*

### District plan sacrifices teachers, programs

To the Editor:  
I write this letter urging a no vote on the May Morrow County School District serial levy only after a good deal of personal anguish. I am a strong supporter of public education and have volunteered freely of my time, energy and talents in assisting the students, faculty and administration with Morrow County School District programs. I have closely followed the educational budgeting process in the state legislature for the past 10 years. Both my son and I testified at legislative hearings. I understand the public educational funding crisis results from a lack of proper funding in Salem. I cannot understand why our legislators sacrifice our state's and our children's futures. However, I cannot in good conscience vote for a district plan which sacrifices teachers and needed educational programs without cutting in other areas first. The district has proposed expending benefits to administrators and those it wants to train as administrators and cutting only what hurts our students.

The Helix and Pendleton school districts were successful with their serial levy elections because those districts did three things the Morrow County School District refuses to do:

1. Invited and considered public input. The Morrow County School District developed a policy of teaching and program cuts without public

input and refused to consider or implement suggestions made by the public at meetings held in February or March.

2. Announced to the public that if the levy passed, the district's education programs would remain intact. The Morrow County School District instead is committed to cutting educational programs.

3. Worked to unite community opinion to support the proposed levy. The Morrow County District's proposal creates gross inequities in educational and class room opportunities which has led to divisiveness among the Morrow County communities. Until the school board learns to listen to its citizens and provide leadership and policy which meets the educational needs of the entire Morrow County community, it will be difficult for me to support its programs.

The citizens of Morrow County have never been reluctant to vote to raise property taxes for the educational needs of their children. But, voting for the current serial levy means an endorsement of the faculty and program cuts. It says we approve of the district's refusal to consider possible alternatives or listen to the public. It means voting for a budget that makes no administrative sacrifices while our children lose massive educational opportunities. I cannot in good conscience do so.

(s) William J. Kuhn  
Heppner

### Vote down levy

To the Editor:

Should we vote for the five-year levy? Recently, threatened with the loss of whole programs and many teachers, people begin to realize that we are not making the best use of school funds. At two large meetings many suggestions were made to our school board that may help to solve the problem. These ideas were not adopted. Many of us now recognize that for years our board has rubber stamped the district administrator's decisions without analyzing and evaluating the possible ramifications of those decisions. Among other things we have added administrators raising salaries and perks to same, given busing to commercial transportation, added new sports categories, more assistant coaches (passed a levy for that), made excessive purchases of some school equipment, added some strictly not needed construction and so on.

Now we are in trouble. We can't meet that budget shortfall by blaming some one else--- Salem, the administration, the teachers, parents, Hispanics, etc. We must focus on one goal, one goal only, of providing classrooms with good teachers to offer a quality liberal education for every child. We must make a more careful analysis on every cent we spend with that goal only in mind.

We all have a responsibility to vote. Do we want our board to continue rubber stamping whatever the superintendent says? Do we really think that Morrow County is either Pendleton or Helix? Do we want to go from the frying pan into the fire?

If we're smart, we will take the advice of one courageous board member and vote down the levy, which will require them to change their direction, to do their homework.

(s) Jane Rawlins  
Heppner

### Museum to stay open with volunteers

To the Editor:

The Morrow County Museum funding has been drastically reduced, due to county budget cuts. The two positions at the museum have been deleted. The future of the museum now rests with the community and the enthusiastic volunteers who have stepped forward to help. The Museum Commission would like to assure those in the community who have contributed items that the collection will be protected and maintained and displayed in a clean environment.

We cannot hope to maintain the facility to the standards that we had in the past, but we hope that it can be kept open at least two days a week, and longer if more volunteers sign up. Our hope is, future funding will become available to allow the museum to function as it did in the past.

While it will be difficult to replace the passion and experience of Marsha and Tami, the commission has

found a capable and knowledgeable volunteer in Robin Krebs. She will be in charge of organizing, screening and scheduling the volunteers. Robin will also help with maintaining and caring for the displays.

The Museum Commission appreciates the dedications, history, and professional displays of Marsha and Tami. The whole community has benefited.

Anyone wishing to volunteer toward keeping the museum open is urged to contact one of the commissioners or Secretary Sharon Harrison, 989-8496, or John Church, president, 676-5401. Other commission members are Jerri Sly, Ken Nelson, Cecil Rill, Betty Carlson, Barbara Bloodworth, Richard Woods, Ray French, Mary Goheen, Bob Harrison, Al Osmin, or Howard Mullins. Feel free to call any one of them.

(s) Sharon Harrison  
Lexington

## Schools deserve your support

To The Editor

During the past several months, I have had an opportunity to attend and participate in three major budget sessions in the Morrow County School District. The sessions were held at Sam Boardman Elementary School, Heppner High School and Columbia Middle School in Irrigon. In addition, I have had an opportunity to spend a considerable amount of time taking a very careful look at the school district budget.

Because of the geographical distribution of communities coupled with major changes in state funding, the district is faced with severe financial problems. Hundreds of people from throughout the county took part in the three sessions. I was very impressed with the amount of time people were willing to give on behalf of the education of their children.

During the sessions, it was necessary to take a very hard look at many difficult issues. Compromise is never easy. However, people from all areas of the county repeatedly expressed their desire to do what is best for all the students--no matter where they live.

In a few weeks, Morrow County voters will be asked to go to the polls on behalf of their schools. The local option tax levy is something which is new this year and is a way for local districts to help offset funding shortfalls. Hopefully, it will not

be a permanent solution. Unfortunately, in the meantime, these are really no alternatives. If we want to maintain quality schools, we need the local option.

Fortunately, people in Eastern Oregon care about quality schools. The property tax limitations did not receive a majority vote here when they were originally proposed. Those ballot measures were carried by voters living on the westside. There are more of them than there are of us so we are stuck with the result. In recent months, local voters have reaffirmed the need to keep quality schools in our local communities by passing local option measures in Helix and Pendleton.

During my tenure in the ESD, I have had a chance to visit the schools in Heppner, Ione, Boardman and Irrigon. In most cases, the schools are not large, but they are the center of the community and the students are being served well. Passage of the local option tax will help perpetuate that service and the winners will be the students. I sincerely hope that enough voters will step forward to make sure that the local option tax passes in Morrow County. The schools there have proven they deserve your support.

(s) George Murdoch  
Superintendent  
Umatilla-Morrow ESD  
2001 S. W. Nye Avenue  
Pendleton, Oregon 97801

### Yes on 81

To the editor:

For over 100 years, the legislature has had the ability to protect good people from unfair lawsuits. Our health care workers, small business owners, police officers, firefighters, EMT's, volunteers, "good Samaritans" and many others are shielded from unfair lawsuits because of these protections.

Now, because of an Oregon Supreme Court ruling last year, these good folks are facing the prospect of having their protections stripped away.

That is why Measure 81 is so important. A "yes" vote on Measure 81 ensures that each

and every one of these good people will continue to be protected against unfair lawsuits.

Without Measure 81, the people we depend on most will be open to every form of litigation. As a result, Oregonians face the prospect of higher costs for goods, services, insurance, as well as higher taxes.

We can avoid this by keeping our common sense protections in place: Vote yes on 81.

(s) J.L. Wilson  
State Director  
NFIB Oregon  
1320 Capitol St NE #100  
Salem, OR 97303

### Water safety classes offered

Three water safety courses, Lifeguard Training, Water Safety Instructor and Lifeguard Instructor are being offered by Blue Mountain Community College this spring and early summer.

An orientation session is scheduled for this Sunday, May 7, at Willow Creek Water Park. Interested participants are urged to pre-register by contacting Anne Morter, south Morrow County coordinator, at 422-7040.

Candidates for lifeguard training must be 15 years old and be able to pass a pre-session skills test. The course is 39 hours in length and includes CPR for the Professional Rescuer.

Cost of the class is \$70 for tuition and \$37 for the book and certification fees.

The orientation session will be held May 7 from 1-1:30 p.m. at WCWP.

A Water Safety Instructor

card certifies a person to teach various water courses including swim lessons. A prerequisite to the class is Instructor Candidate Training, a six-hour course.

WSI candidates must be 17 years old and be able to pass a pre-session skills and knowledge test. The orientation for WSI is set for 2-2:30 p.m. on Sunday, May 7, at WCWP. The orientation for ICT is at 1:30 p.m.

The Lifeguard Instructor class trains candidates to teach lifeguard training, CPR for the Professional Rescuer, Lifeguard Instructor Aide and Community Water Safety. Students must be 17 years old and be able to pass a pre-session skills test. The orientation for this class is set for 2:30-3 p.m. May 7.

For more information or to pre-register, contact Anne Morter as soon as possible

## Guest Editorial

### Voters have 2,266 important reasons to vote yes

Morrow County voters have 2,266 very important reasons to vote yes on the Local Option School Levy on the May 16 mail-in ballot. All 2,266 Morrow County school children will receive increased attention and more instruction with the addition of funding for 10 teachers in the district over the next five years with the passage of the Local Option School Levy. All 10 teachers will work directly with students each and every school day. Your ballot will state that a "Yes" vote will provide the communities of Boardman and Irrigon with seven teachers distributed through their schools, for the ever-increasing enrollment and English as a Second Language population; Heppner schools will receive two teachers and the lone schools will get one teacher to maintain programs. More teachers allow for lower class sizes and more course offerings for all children of the county. Passage of the Local Option Levy at this election will fund these 10 teachers for next school year, and the following four years. Passing the levy at a later date would not allow funding these 10 teachers for the 2000-2001 school year. Your Morrow County children need teachers next year, not whenever the legislature finally funds our schools adequately.

The Local Option Levy is our first chance since the passage of Measure 5 eight years ago, to provide additional funds locally for our schools. During that entire time, we have been dependent on the politics and maneuverings of the Legislature for the funding of our schools, with no ability to provide for our own unique needs. This year the state reduced the amount of money in the funding formula for Morrow County Schools so that we are spending 1.3 million dollars more than we are generating in the current school year. We have covered the shortfall by using half of our cash reserves. If this pattern were to have continued for next year, we would have been spending more than we would receive from the state funding formula. Next year we would not have had enough cash reserves to make up the difference as we did this year. Funding from the state has never been adequate. In the past few years, we have made significant cuts in a variety of areas, such as selling buses and contracting for bus service, operating on a four-day school week, eliminating all co-curricular activities from the school budget (i.e. sports), reducing the cost of food service, reducing supplies and equipment expenses, and reducing staff in the '95/'96 school year. The school board has been forced to face the financial reality that we would be spending more than we would take in next year. Trimming a budget that has already been trimmed is painful and difficult whether in a home, business, or public organization. Your board has agonized over and spent many hours of time and thought working to make responsible decisions and to use the limited resources wisely. Cutting \$992,789 from a bare bones budget is a monumental task. While there are surely as many ideas of how to do this as there are people in Morrow County, the law requires the seven members of the school board to make a decision that is timely and responsible. In response to the obvious need for reduction, the Morrow County School Board on February 14, 2000, voted to eliminate 17 teaching positions, funding for 1.5 administrative positions, and 2.75 support personnel from the budget for next school year. Teachers account for \$837,702 and the other positions account for \$155,087.

We are now coming to you, the public (parents, grandparents, family, and business people), in hope that you will respond to the need of our children with the only option we have locally to provide for their needs. The Legislature did provide us one avenue with which to take care of needs they left unfunded. This levy is limited in scope, but would provide us the ability to replace 10 of the teachers that have been eliminated, thus lessening the impact and severity of this budget crisis. Now is the time for Morrow County to be proactive and positive. It is time to look at the whole picture with a view to the longevity and durability of this area as a good place to live. Our neighbors in Pendleton and Helix have already stood up and said "Yes" to the local option. It is a time to maintain pride in ourselves and to take local responsibility for our needs where we are able. To quote the East Oregonian, "Good schools attract residents and businesses, which in turn broaden the tax base. Bad schools have just the opposite effect." No one likes additional expenses. When buying something, everyone looks at what the return on his or her dollar will be. Supporting our schools is a good buy. People like to live and work where their children are well provided for. Our communities can only grow and prosper while we continue to provide adequate schools. A yes vote for this special levy is a way for us to add back some educational opportunities for our children.

-Gary Fredrickson, Dwayne Carroll, Pat McNamee, John Rietmann, Julie Weikel

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