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Letters

Do not accept Federal funds for new school

To the Editor:

Passing the Bond IS Passing the Buck

All Vernonians are proud of their history, ancestors, and how they made their way

How hard they worked and struggled to make the town what it is today

Our ancestors valued education and built a school of brick for their children to attend

A school the community and parents made a plan for and funded in the end

The question is did they build it all at once, since they were poorer than poor?

Or did they upgrade and improve over time when they needed something more

They must have had trust and faith in the system to increase taxes and raise support

Their elected officials proved fiscally responsible especially when the people's paychecks were short

Every community member recognizes the importance of a new school, and raising tax dollars to do so

But times have shown that consistency and fiscal respon-

sibility are at an all time low

After '96 everyone truly believed they had a long time until the next "100 year"

And when it happened again in '07 school officials knew their "opportunity" for a new school was here

They say the school will close if this bond does not pass

And we have the "opportunity" to get "free federal dollars" at last

They have asked the community for their opinions, support and ideas for a new school

But I have to question whether this was just to appease and keep tempers cool

There are a lot of options, but all I hear are threats

And I am shamed at the prospect that Vernonian's aren't ready to pay for their own debts.

Other communities don't expect America's citizens to pay for their schools because of tragedy

And they step up to the plate to create bonds funded by local citizens with the utmost responsibility

Passing the bond IS passing the buck...I know it doesn't sound as cute

But we cannot expect to get

away with paying just 13 million, leaving America the rest of the bill to foot

I will not be guilty or deluded into thinking we deserve other taxpayers money to complete this new school

I'll be voting "NO" on this bond, because I am not going to "pass the buck" to the rest of America like a fool

I know my "NO" will sound small, to the resounding "YES" vote

But I will hold the principals and values of my ancestors as I sign that note

While others will be rejoicing and prideful because they built a new school

When I enter the doors, I will hang my head in shame, as a rule.

**Kandis Strassel Sewell
and Kara Strassel Kemper
Vernonia**

We can be proud to vote for new schools

To the Editor:

ASHAMED?

Will you be ashamed of yourself come election day? Well I think some residents in our community will be. I have heard talk around town regard-

ing some longtime residents actually questioning why we need new schools and why taxpayers should contribute. Honestly, wake up people! I understand the lack of employment and the current economic woes but we all must realize how much worse things will be if we don't get our schools in order. Anyone who had the opportunity to go to school in Vernonia or simply knows a current student in the system needs to VOTE YES! I want you to vote for my grandkids so they can have a future in Vernonia and I want you to vote for Vernonia because if you don't vote Vernonia will not survive. Please don't be ASHAMED and please VOTE YES for Vernonia schools.

**Shelley Elton
VHS 1970**

Annual assessment increases bond \$\$

To the Editor:

I was examining my Columbia County tax statement to determine how much I would have to pay for the school bond measure each year. The assessed valuation is the figure to use, times \$1.90 per each \$1000 of evaluation. For \$250,000 assessed evaluation I would pay approximately \$500 for the first year. However, do you realize that according to state law our assessed valuations can and does go up 3%

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Guest Opinion

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defendant had engaged in a terror campaign against her after his original arrest. According to the allegations, in defiance of the temporary restraining and no-contact orders – sometimes with the assistance of fellow officers – the defendant had stalked, harassed and deliberately frightened the accuser. One extraordinary detective defied both camps to conduct an unbiased investigation. As a result, the acquitted officer faced new criminal charges.

At the time the complaints of domestic violence first surfaced, the chief of police in Toledo was in the process of transferring elsewhere. He was replaced as chief by Don Denison – who would go on to be the first police chief in the state ever convicted of ethics violations. Denison was a staunch supporter of the acquitted officer, who had been his personal protegee. By contrast, when the long-standing chief of police in Newport retired, he was replaced by an experienced out-of-county chief who brought and enforced his standards of impartiality with him.

I was in the audience when the acquitted officer was tried for violating the temporary restraining order. The Newport police officers who had first offered to testify on behalf of the defendant were now, months later, called as prosecution witnesses. Their voices reflected a state of shock over a fellow officer's betrayal. When asked about this officer's reputation for telling the truth,

they sorrowfully reported that, no, his reputation was now for dishonesty. In fact, they had been duped. He had been caught in a web of lies and hurt the image of all of them. It took years for this community to heal all the wounds the initial rift had created, but that healing began the day the first fellow officer testified against Michael Kay.

After his conviction for having violated a temporary restraining order, I assumed Kay's career in law enforcement was over. When I proudly read of Vernonia's courage in the face of devastating floods, the last thing I expected was quotes from "Acting Police Chief Michael Kay." Citizens of Vernonia inspired the state and the nation with their resilience and courage in the face of a natural disaster. We are now looking to see what you do with one that is man-made, and far more predictable than the weather.

Alice Vachss, JD, is the former Chief of the Special Victims Bureau of the Queens (NYC) District Attorney's Office. She is the author of Sex Crimes (Random House, 1993). Before assuming leadership of the Special Victims Bureau, Ms. Vachss was a VISTA volunteer, a counselor in a maximum security prison for violent youth, and a trial attorney in New York City's Legal Aid Criminal Defense Division. Ms. Vachss continues to lecture and consult, nationally and internationally, and is the author of numerous articles, including "All Rape Is Real Rape," (New York Times Op-Ed). She is also the co-publisher of Teal Ribbon Publications, LLC, a small press specializing in non-fiction on the topic of sexual assault response.

Policy on Letters

The INDEPENDENT will not publish letters that include personal attacks on private citizens. Because of space limitations, preference will be given to brief letters, 300 words or less.

All letters must be signed and include a verifiable address or phone number.

NOTICE

The INDEPENDENT publishes on the first and third Thursday of each month. Because there are five Thursdays in October, there will be three weeks before the next issue is published on November 5, 2009. The deadline for the next issue is Friday, October 30, 2009.