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Letter to the Editor

Editor,

In response to Norman who responded to a concerned citizen about cleaning up dog poop at the Reservoir - this is a problem, Norman and all dog owners - and I understand why the Res keeps threatening to prohibit dogs. There is poop everywhere - even in the middle of the sidewalk. The Res provides bags at three convenient locations - there is no reason for any dog owner to not have a bag with them on Res trail.

I have a Yellow Lab; my best friend has two Boston Terriers. When we walk our dogs, we know they will poop and it's our responsibility to have bags to clean-up after them. Why go on and on about how innocent dogs are, how they can't read or don't care about the evil of their poop? This is not the wilderness and they are not in packs. You are their protector and guardian, responsible for their health and their safety; you are responsible to have them licensed, leashed (where appropriate) and for any ruckus they engage in. And you are responsible for picking up after them. When you, Brutus and Essie go out for that inspiring moment of friendship, companionship and 24x7 love - bring two bags with you.

Suzanne, Terry, Shadow (15), Ruby(2) and Annie(1)
Moraga

MEASURE G

Dear Editor,

As a member of the Campolindo High School class of 1977 and the mother of two recent Campolindo graduates and a current freshman, I have long-term experience with the impact that our excellent schools have on our lives. Throughout the generation that has passed since I left high school, the State of California has failed to reliably provide adequate and stable funding for our public schools. Passage of Measure G, the \$189 parcel tax renewal for the Acalanes High School District, is vital to maintaining excellence in our schools. Without those funds the District will be forced to make deep cuts to core academic programs - the equivalent of all of the teachers at one of our four high schools. Our schools are far too valuable an asset to allow this to happen. Please join me in helping to preserve quality education in our high schools by voting "yes" on Measure G on November 3.

Sincerely,
Kathy Ranstrom
Moraga

To the Editor:

In a front-page article, reporter Jennifer Wake (Lamorinda Weekly, Oct. 14) referred incorrectly to my letter to the editor published in the Weekly on Sept. 16, 2009.

Ms. Wake, in referring to me, stated that I claimed that . . . "the California unemployment rate is at an all-time high . . ."

In my Sept. 16 letter, I never claimed that the California unemployment rate was at an all-time high. I did, in my letter, state that: "Currently, the official unemployment rate for California is 11.9 percent." For July 2009, the California unemployment rate was 11.9 per cent (Contra Costa Times, Aug. 22, 2009).

Since my Sept. 16 letter appeared in the Weekly, the California unemployment rate has gone even higher. For August, the rate went to 12.2 percent (Contra Costa Times, Sept. 18). This is the highest official rate of unemployment for California since 1940.

I still contend that, at a time of high unemployment, the Acalanes Union High School District should have asked for a temporary extension of its proposed \$189 property (parcel) tax.

The district should not have asked for a permanent increase in the tax. The tax matter will, as Measure G, appear on the Nov. 3 ballot.

Acalanes residents should vote "no" on the proposed tax.

Richard S. Colman
Orinda

To the Editor:

In my dozen-plus years of working on behalf of our schools I've seen time and again the central role local support plays in keeping our schools strong. The recent round of state budget cuts, which has forced the Acalanes High School District to cut \$6 million (the equivalent of \$1000 per student) from its budget, vividly illustrates the need for a secure base of local support.

California ranks 47th in the nation in both spending per student (when adjusted for cost of living) and student achievement on nationally normed tests. The Acalanes High School District, however, with graduation rates, college attendance, and performance on standardized tests at the top of the state, stands out as an exception to the California norm. The quality of our local schools is due in no small measure to the investment of local taxpayers. Simply put, the State of California does not adequately fund public education – not in good times, nor in bad. That is why Measure G is needed. Measure G will not raise taxes but it will secure the critical base of local support that helps protect our classrooms from the vagaries of the state's budget cycles. Please join me in voting Yes on Measure G for strong schools, successful students, and a vibrant community.

Pat Rudebusch
Orinda
Dear Editor,

Thirty years ago California public education was tops in the United States. Today the Acalanes Union High School District stands as one of the few school districts in the state able to maintain that high quality. It has done so in spite of Sacramento's ongoing cuts to its budget.

Measure G provides our communities with an opportunity to maintain the high quality education provided by renewing and continuing the Acalanes Union High School District's existing parcel tax. As former school board members, we urge you to vote for quality, vote for Measure G on November 3rd.

Judy Carney & Mary McCosker
Lafayette

Dear Editor,

Excellent Lamorinda Schools Better Our Communities

Fifteen years ago we moved to Lamorinda to allow our children to take advantage of its excellent public schools. Many of our friends moved here for the same reason. The state of California budget crisis is now threatening our local public schools.

To that end, the Acalanes Union High School District has had its budget reduced by \$6.0M. Measure G is our opportunity to provide the AUHSD with stable, reliable local funding that the State can not take away. Join me in voting Yes on Measure G.

Teresa Gerringer
Lafayette

Dear Editor,

I support YES on Measure G (an extension of the existing \$189 parcel tax for the Acalanes Union High School District) and ask all voters to cast their vote in favor of protecting our future.

It's simple. Good schools reflect the high standards and vitality of a community. High performing schools symbolize the values and commitment of its citizenry. According to John Stockton, AUSHD Superintendent, "The high performance of the Acalanes Union High School District is due in large measure to the funding provided by the parcel tax." For almost 20 years the District has had a parcel tax. As with many districts in our State, parcel tax revenue provides stable, local funding and ours currently protects core academic programs funding the equivalent of approximately 70 teaching positions. Our students can't afford to have their education compromised.

To reiterate the obvious, quality schools play a significant role in maintaining and increasing our home values and building a strong community. Even though there are many beautiful communities with great weather in California, people choose to live here for the good schools and the long-standing community commitment to invest in our future.

Mary Newman
Lafayette

Editor:

I would employ Orinda residents to vote no on Measure G and stop taxing us for school funding when there is ample funding right in front of our eyes. Why aren't we investigating on how to cut back and spend less? Because its easier to ask for more money, than to take a apart existing programs and fix what is broken.

I understand that all parents want the best for their students. After all, that's why we work so hard, so that our students can get a superior education in Orinda. That said, there are alternatives that aren't being interjected in the dialogue.

The eScrip program asks local businesses to donate a percentage of money spent in their stores back to the school system. And eScrip provides a tracking system online for parents to enroll their debit/credit cards.

-Why are parents not enrolling in the eScrip online mall so that we can take advantage of business donations?

-Why aren't parents signing up their spouse- which could earn up to several hundred thousand dollars without Orinda families having to spend a dime more in taxes.

-Popular, mainstream stores provide donations to our schools, and Orinda parents aren't taking action.

This small example enunciates that when we fix these operational problems, and when Orinda parents actually sign-up and use the online mall for this holiday season, contributions from business partners in the eScrip program can amount to hundreds of thousands of dollars for Orinda's schools. This is money parents are already spending, that businesses are taking out of their profits to donate to schools.

The long and short of it is this, when there is less abundance, i.e. money from the state- Orindians don't cut back, or try and make things work more efficiently, they in effect ask their citizenry for more money.

Instead of taxing each household more money, why don't we fix what is broke. Apathetic Orinda, sign up for eScrip and take advantage of the business contributions already in place to fund our schools.

Christine Temple-Wolfe
Orinda

Moraga Orinda Fire District

Dear Editor,

I am extremely angry and concerned after reading Daniel Borenstine's column in the Times, entitled " Expensive fire district needs to be studied."

Frankly, I do not think that Mr Borenstine did his due diligence in gathering information before he made certain assumptions and statements in his article.

MOFD is a crucial part of our town's infrastructure and we benefit greatly by the service it provides to our communities. Responding quickly to emergencies and knowing the roads well is a matter of life and death in most situations. Why mess with a system that was put into effect for important reasons in 1997 without concrete evidence of its failure or disfunction. If our fire services are changed by annexing MOFD to the Contra Costa Fire District, it will be disastrous for our community.

We as responsible members of this community cannot take a backseat attitude after reading an article whose misinformation could directly impact and compromise the safety of our lives.

Sincerely,
Sonny Hanson
Orinda

To Editor:

I believe Ellen Dale's article in the 10/17/09 Times was filled with misinformation without documentation.

Using common sense and 5th grade math, it becomes obvious that since the creation of Moraga/Orinda Fire District (MOFD) in 1997 Orinda has been subsidizing Moraga. Orinda has 52% of all medical and fire incidents to 48% in Moraga. Yet Orinda furnishes 65% of the budget revenue to only 35% from Moraga. This financial disparity increases to 70% from Orinda and 30% from Moraga within a few years. (See MOFD Long Range Financial Plan 2/20/07).

Orinda is paying \$2.4 million more annually for its three stations than Moraga pays for its 2 stations. This \$2.4 million will increase to almost \$4 million when Montanera comes on line (See MOFD Long Range Financial Plan 2/20/07). There is no amount of undocumented assertions that can justify Orinda subsidizing Moraga \$4 million annually.

Orinda must detach from MOFD, and form an Orinda Fire District. Ms Dale states that if LAFCO would allow

detachment from MOFD, they would most likely require the Orinda be annexed to Con Fire. This flies in the face of past history.

LAFCO allowed Orinda to detach from Con Fire in 1997. What evidence does Ms. Dale have that LAFCO would not allow Orinda to detach today from MOFD and form an Orinda Fire District?

Orinda citizens voted to detach from Con Fire and form MOFD in 1997 because Orinda was subsidizing other communities in the county. Orinda citizens should now have the same opportunity to vote to determine if Orinda should detach from MOFD to stop subsidizing Moraga. An Orinda Fire District would allow Orinda to use its tax dollars in Orinda. The money Orinda uses to subsidize Moraga could be better spent on Orinda roads and water pipes.

Janet Maiorana
Orinda

Editor:

I am a member of a group of Orinda and Moraga citizens looking into the efficiency of our emergency service provider, MOFD. The group is called FAIR (Fire And Infrastructure Renewal). In a letter circulating the community and in a Readers Forum article in the Contra Costa Times, we have been accused of being malcontents who are going to cause our emergency services to revert to the county who would then reduce them and use the savings elsewhere in the county.

Nothing could be further from the truth. Any changes FAIR would consider or propose would guarantee equivalent or enhanced emergency services in addition to cost savings for Orinda and Moraga.

In Orinda we pay \$1,700 per household in property taxes to MOFD, four times what the average user of the county emergency service provider, ConFire, pays. The contention is that this is due to our low population density requiring more stations; but that only accounts for part of this cost disparity.

The MOFD budget for 2009/10 is \$19.5 million. This is more than the City of Orinda's \$11 million and the Town of Moraga's \$6.4 million budgets combined.

FAIR believes that there are economies to be had that will still provide Orinda and Moraga with equivalent or better service. I ask the community to support FAIR's efforts (www.fairfororinda.org).

Steve Cohn
Orinda

Reach the reporter at: info@lamorindaweekly.com

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