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## Letters to the Editor

Editor:

My only problem with the GIANT, STARK WHITE lettering on our new friendly DOLLAR STORE is that they don't flash 24/7. I do hate to complain, but...

Jari Hazard

Moraga

Editor:

All taxpayers are not treated equal. Take Ivy Dr. residents as an example. They pay property taxes like we all do, but they get preferential treatment. Even though, they live in the Ivy Dr. loop going to Miramonte High School and also, what the city of Orinda considers a collector street and feeder to two schools, they decide who goes through "their" street and who does not. They decided, sometime ago that they do not want Miramonte High school traffic going through their street in the mornings.

So, they went to the City Council and the City granted them a No Left Turn restriction on "their street." They did not want students parking in "their" street and the City granted them restrictive parking on Ivy Drive.

They got privileges they did not deserve at the expense of the City taxpayers, that not only pay property taxes, but pay school parcel taxes and end up restricted from using a public street and get tickets if they dare to do so. Is that fair?

No left turn restriction went up on Southwaite Ct, to insure that Ivy Drive was fully blocked from traffic going back to "their" street. Is worth mentioning that left turns are still legal on Leslee Lane.

Maria Campos

Orinda

Editor:

Democracy requires participation amongst the governed, but the people must be provided the information necessary to render informed decisions. All people maintain a fundamental right to safety and health information about technologies that will directly impact one's health. San Francisco's trend-setting disclosure of radiation specific absorption rates (SAR) signifies a pivotal shift in the raging debate over the hidden long-term health risks of cell phones. Lt. Gov. Newsom describes his legislation as "a modest and commonsense measure to provide greater transparency and information."

The FCC, a federal agency handling communication matters, for over a decade, stipulated the exact methods used approximating cell phone's SAR. Shockingly, the FCC established SAR limits without any pre-market safety testing and guidelines are outdated by over 15 years. Currently, the FCC is arguing (without offering any reasoning) that SAR is meaningless and proposing to eliminate all wired landlines. The FCC withdrawal of information from their website paralleled arguments from the Cellular Telecommunications Industry (CTIA) opposing San Francisco Right to Know ordinance about disclosing cell phone radiation levels.

In order to separate truth from fiction, we need more independent research instead of self-serving studies funded by the cell phone industry. UC Berkeley Professor Joel Moskowitz argues that independent studies demonstrate "consistent evidence that heavy cell phone use for a decade or longer increases brain tumor risk at least 30%." Mr. Snowden of the CTIA wants to be "very clear. The CTIA has not said once...that cell phones are safe." The CTIA argues that most studies do not demonstrate a direct link between cell phone usage and cancer. However, these studies examine health effects only in the short-term. The early introduction and ubiquity of cell phones in Scandinavia translates into a 240% increased risk of glioma for individuals using their cell phone in excess of ten years.

Comparatively, Israel, Germany, Finland, Russia, Switzerland, France, and Canada have all expressed serious concerns. Switzerland already requires SAR warning labels on cell phones, and France already has cell phone marketing restrictions to children. Additionally, the U.S. President's Commission on Cancer reports that extended cell phone usage causes brain tumors. It is inexcusable to allow technological advances invented to enrich our lives rob us of our lives instead. Reducing direct radiation exposure to the brain can be achieved by promoting simple precautionary measures like wearing a headset, using the speakerphone, or texting. Enacting simple precautions to reduce exposure will save us from a potential global epidemic of brain tumors.

Consumers must continue to demand the successful Right to Know ordinance be implemented in San Francisco. Consumers must demand cell phones require warning labels similar to cigarettes. Consumers must demand their city follow in the footsteps of San Francisco. Even if we agree to disagree on the validity of current studies, we should make the compromise that information and simple precautions help protect public health.

Sincerely,

Zack Marks

Lafayette

Lafayette Measure B

Editor:

As a thirty year resident of Lafayette and a full time Real Estate Broker for 27+ years in Lamorinda, I urge you to vote for Measure B which will provide temporary emergency funding for our top rated Lafayette Schools. The passage of Measure B will positively impact our property values. Threatened by the ongoing state budget crisis, our elementary and middle schools need this support now. It goes directly to classroom instruction and will help keep our schools among the top in the State.

I believe one of the most important factors in families with school aged children coming to Lafayette is the excellence of our public schools. Some come from out of state, but many come from other Bay Area communities. Our top rated Lafayette school district is of monumental importance in their decision to relocate here. As long as our public schools are among the best in the State, the demand for homes in this area will continue, and this will continue to directly impact our property values.

Whether you have school aged children in the Lafayette or not, I urge you to support this important Measure B.

Sincerely,  
Patricia Battersby  
Lafayette

Editor:

You know about Measure B having spoken with a friend, received a call from a supporter, or seen a sign in a neighbor's yard. As a Lafayette City Council member, I believe the entire community should support schools. Speak with any leading Lafayette realtor to learn that schools attract new homebuyers to Lafayette. As I campaigned last fall, I encountered many new families, each of whom "Loves Lafayette."

The schools' appeal keeps Lafayette's population steady and partially mitigates the decline in home values. New residents volunteer for school and other activities, patronize local merchants, and pay taxes. Their interest in Lafayette strengthens the community. As their children age, these residents will assume other volunteer and career leadership positions and maintain Lafayette's desirability.

Measure B is critical for our children. Since 2008, the Lafayette School District's state revenue declined by \$1,100 per student. The need by Sacramento politicians to make-up for state budget shortfalls could reduce per pupil spending by another several hundred dollars next year.

Parents are asked to contribute approximately \$1,000 per child to augment the school budget. As recent homebuyers, many are stretched.

Measure B will alleviate the worst of the potential reductions but does not allow for lavish spending. Measure B, a four-year parcel tax of approximately 50 cents per day, enables us to retain essential programs, provide children with a good education, and maintain Lafayette's appeal for new residents.

Please join me in voting for Measure B and watch for your mail ballot in April.

Sincerely,  
Don Tatzin  
Lafayette

Dear Fellow Lafayette Residents,

This letter is to implore you to support our emergency local parcel tax campaign, Measure B.

I currently live in Lafayette and was a principal here for 42 years. During that time I always inquired as to why a new family moved here. As you probably know, 100% of the families I asked responded, "We moved here for the schools."

Lafayette is an affluent area, but the inverse applies to state funding of our district education budget (we are among the lowest per student funding in the state). Our budget shortfall for 2011-2012 will be two and a quarter million more dollars and result in further cuts.

For some time we have been facing and making conscientious muscle and bone cuts to programs, students, services, and staff, all the while trying our best to keep our children's education the center of our focus.

In addressing these huge cuts in our already decimated budget, our Governing Board, staff and community have determined some of the 2011-12 budget reductions will include, but are not limited to:

Employee layoffs

Four additional unpaid furlough days (resulting in four less teaching days for students) in addition to the two furlough days implemented in the 2010-11 school year.

Increase in health care co-pay for all employees

Cuts to music and science instruction

\$75,000 reduction in technology budget

Layoff of four elementary teachers

Larger class sizes with decreased instructional aide time

Once again, we desperately need our wonderful community to partner in funding our schools. Your support will help mitigate the severity of the impact of the aforementioned cuts the Budget Reduction Plan will require (absent passage of Measure B).

We all acknowledge we moved here for our excellent schools. Please support Measure B. It will really help keep the Lafayette educational experience great!

Best regards,  
Ben Shaw

Editor:

I have read with interest the pros and cons of Measure B, the Lafayette School District's Parcel Tax. In my opinion, the citizens of Lafayette are being exploited and frightened by a dire scenario if we do not vote for another increase AGAIN.

The District has gone to the well too many times with the same horrendous school district decline predicted if we do not vote more money to the District. It is time for the District to be forthright with its citizens.

I have two questions.

1)- why is the District only using 10% of its \$3,000,000 reserves. I thought reserves were to be used in an emergency - why ask the citizens to pay more when Lafayette School District is only using \$300,000 of its reserves? Also, Lafayette Arts and Science is donating \$1,700,000 and I am sure the PTAs are also raising money.

2) - whatever happened to the money from the sale of three school sites - Burton Valley, Vallecito, and Ellis. These funds have never been mentioned - are they gone? Is the District using only the interest? How were they spent or do they still exist in the reserve account

Remember, it has only been two years since the District came to us with the same dire predictions. I would think one could ask if the administration is so incompetent that they were not able to forecast a need for more money two years ago or did they play the game of "let's get some now and we can go out for more in two years." I was told that this was the District's plan all along.

Do I want great schools - absolutely. Do I think the citizens are being thought of as gullible and easily scared - absolutely. You may also want to consider that the Lafayette test scores have been falling every year - even with the influx of money. I only ask that you think seriously about the tax and its timing.

I would suggest that we call their bluff and see how many services are reduced if the citizens do not vote for the tax. Perhaps they would dip into their \$3,000,000 reserve.

Charles Baker

Lafayette

Editor:

It has been my pleasure to be a teacher in the Lafayette School District for over ten years. I have always felt so blessed to be part of a district that supports the education of all the students. Teachers, support staff, administrators, community foundations and school board members work together for the common goal of excellent education for all students. This takes time, energy and money.

As most are aware, state funding has been unstable, at best. Every year we are faced with deeper and deeper cuts. For the past three years, we have all worked incredibly hard to keep cuts away from the classroom, while maintaining the excellence in classroom education. This year the teachers had two furlough (unpaid) days, which were taken during regular teacher in-service days, keeping student contact days the same. Next year we are facing an additional four furlough days which will impact the student contact days. Teachers will be forced to make choices about how to provide the same excellence within a shorter timeframe. Measure B will help replace those lost days and preserve the quality education we have fought so hard to keep.

We are all hoping to weather this "financial" storm and maintain a quality education in the Lafayette School District. Please join with me and vote "yes" on Measure B.

Sincerely,

Judy Zenoni

Editor:

First they came for our maintenance staff,  
and I did not speak out because I did not value their importance.

Then they came for our music program,  
and I did not speak out because I did not see the worth in learning the arts.

Then they came for our science lab,  
and I did not speak out because I did not see the need for hands-on learning.

Then they came for our teachers,  
and I did not speak out because I did not understand the benefit of small class sizes.

Then they came looking for the bright, educated leaders of tomorrow  
to recruit for college,  
and there was nothing left to say, for there were no qualified applicants.

Stay informed. Get involved. Work together to establish stable funding for our schools.

Sincerely,

Jenifer Paul

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