

School Bond Issue Looms Large in Election

It's election time and once again voters are deciding on issues that legislators seem to ignore.

Case in point: The Clark County School District is one of the fastest growing school districts in America. Each year, local residents are barraged with news reports of overcrowding in schools, busing problems, and zoning issues. Each year, local residents watch as the quality of our public school system erodes before our eyes.

We elect state legislators for many reasons. A candidate's stance on educational funding is an issue voters often consider. Every few years, they keep saying educational funding is a priority; every year, I keep hearing about problems.

I'm sick of it.

The latest battle in the quest for better schools is being fought at our ballot boxes. The Clark County School District is holding a bond election "in conjunc-



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tion with the general election." The School District is trying to fix the problems budget cuts and weak politicians have created.

In other words, legislators didn't have the political courage to stand up and say enough. Our representatives, afraid of being labeled "tax and spend," would rather

watch our schools crumble than propose the taxes that are needed.

The school district is proposing a two part bond question. Part A bonds would be worth \$605 million and would fund the "acquiring, constructing, and improving (of) new and older school facilities." These funds would build 24 new school, expand three undersize schools and aid in the repair and updating of older schools. Part A bond funds would cover about 71 percent of the "repair and equipment" needs of the School District.

Part B bonds would be worth \$300 million. These funds would

pay for 13 additional new schools and completely fund the repair of older schools. Part B bonds cannot be issued without the passage of Part A bonds. The passing of Part A bonds and Part B bonds would meet the financial needs of the Clark County School District in full.

Part A bonds are not expected to increase taxes; while Part B bonds would increase property taxes "by 11.2 cents per \$100 assessed valuation," or "approximately \$39 per year for a \$100,000 home."

The school district has launched an all-out campaign for the passage of these bonds, including television ads, mailers and window signs. President Kenny Guinn appears in a television ad with Brian Cram, the district superintendent, urging voters to pass these bonds. School board members have appeared at open houses to discuss what the passage of these bonds would mean to the school their child is attending.

I attended an open house at Valley High School recently. As one of the designated older

schools, Valley would receive \$7 million to update their facilities. Funds would go towards science labs, computers, choir and band facilities, and more.

The main argument of the school board representatives at the meeting was that without the passage of these bonds, the district could not afford to standardize the quality of education for our students. The school district simply does not have the money to update older schools alone.

There were also other important issues, like double sessions and its effect on youth crime or the continuing problem of busing students out of their own neighborhoods for school.

The *Review-Journal* recently reported that Part A bonds are expected to pass by about 60 percent, but Part B bonds are still in danger of not passing at all. Voters, while sympathetic to the need for more funding, don't want to pay more taxes.

While I understand the need for more funding, I have several problems with the way this proposal has been made.

For one, I feel that education is a state matter. Local school boards should not have to hunt for funding in this area. Children are our most vital resource. Everyone profits when the general public is better educated. Parents have educated children, and businesses need educated workers. The first priority of legislators should be the funding of education in this state.

I also have a problem with the idea that, as a non-homeowning voter, I get to decide what taxes a homeowner has to pay. Why do I get to decide whether a homeowner in Clark County gets to pay more in taxes? I get to decide this issue, because legislators didn't do their job and fund our schools!

I plan to vote yes for this issue, and urge all voters to do the same. Our schools need better funding, and it really is the right thing to do. Besides, I don't have to pay for it.

—Nichole Davis is an opinion columnist at *The Rebel Yell*.

Republicans: The "Principle" Wonks?

As the nation gears up for the November elections, the candidates themselves are furiously trying to garnish last-minute endorsements and capitalize on voter resentment through advertisements and speeches.

Republicans are gearing up for a possible takeover of the U.S. Senate and the creation of a strong party presence in the House. The Democrats are practicing damage control, mostly in the form of making sure that President Clinton does not show up to any of their campaign functions.

The Republicans are riding on the pre-election victories of the past year or so, with the election of Republican mayors in the nation's two largest cities—Richard Riordan of Los Angeles and Rudolph Giuliani of New York—and the election of Republican governors in the states of New Jersey and Virginia. Democrats, most certainly, do not wish this trend to continue.

The nation watches as competitive gubernatorial campaigns race for the finish line in Texas, Florida, New York, and California, where Democrats attempt to hold on to their seats in the former three. In California, the controversial Proposition 187, which would deny free social services to illegal immigrants, is in the national conversation these days.

But, despite the fact that Republicans are predicted to win big in next Tuesday's election, the conservative wing of the GOP is starting to feel betrayed by a few so-called moderates and conservatives in the party hierarchy.

A few days ago, Giuliani, the first Republican governor in almost half a century, endorsed the arch-Democrat of New York state politics for reelection. At a dinner, Giuliani said that Gov. Mario Cuomo would "be a better governor" than George Pataki, his Republican opponent.

This move is slightly out of character for the mayor. As a candidate for New York mayor, Giuliani promised to add more police officers to New York's streets, get tough on the "squee-giers" and the transients, who are constantly annoying com-



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muters as well as tourists, and to create a business climate conducive to economic growth. He was constantly accused by (former) mayor David Dinkins of making empty promises in the vein of the infamous "read my lips" rhetoric.

But Giuliani kept his promises. Since his election almost two years ago, with the addition of new police to crime-ridden beats, violent crime, according to NY statistics, has decreased almost 15 percent. Police now have the authority to arrest the "squee-giers," much to the relief of many commuters.

Would Cuomo have done this for the city? Probably not. Would Cuomo ever endorse Giuliani in a re-election bid? Definitely not. Then why, pray tell, would Giuliani support Cuomo now?

It is possible that he really believes that Cuomo is the better governor, and that he is attempting to not be labeled as a partisan by endorsing Republican Pataki.

But it is far more likely and much more believable that Giuliani, for some selfish political reason (i.e., to gain political points in the future in a city that has a 4-to-1 ratio of Democrats to Republicans), sold out to appease the opposite side.

Another such happenstance exists in the state of California. Not only stuck with the dilemma of voting for a governor and a U.S. senator, voters will decide the fate of Proposition 187.

The proposition, which has gained national media attention and has been harshly criticized by Hispanic leaders, seeks to ban illegal immigrants from receiving social welfare benefits, courtesy of California taxpayers. Children of illegals would be banned from the public school system and would only be treated by the medical system in the case of life or death.

Republican Governor Pete Wilson claims that the passage of the referendum would save the state of California some \$3 billion a year. Others contend that Prop 187 is racist. It is an attempt by those who have spent state programs into insurmountable debt to pass the blame on to those who merely use them.

As of late, former Republican administration cabinet members Jack Kemp and William Bennett, co-founders of Empower America, a Washington-based conservative PAC, spoke out against the proposition, much to the dismay of the GOP rank-and-file and conservatives alike.

Conservative thought has contended that illegal immigration is wrong, and that the passage of Prop 187 will insure that the state rids itself of incentives for illegal immigrants to make the sometimes perilous trip across the U.S.-Mexico border.

Pregnant women will illegally cross the border so that their babies can be born as U.S. citizens, thus entitling the mothers to welfare benefits. And Californians are resentful that they have to foot the bill.

It is not that Californians are greedy, selfish, and do not wish to share their wealth with others. It is that Californians would rather spend their money the way they see fit, and are upset that the "bleeding hearts" in the legislature have overstepped the bounds of reason. Legislators have a habit of forgetting that the money they are spending, no matter for what, does not belong to them.

Californians are asking, what ever happened to the rule of law? What ever happened to enforcing the existing laws? Why does Washington hand down unfunded mandates to states, with no consideration of the state's ability to pay?

I can see Kemp's and Bennett's logic in this matter. It is true this country is, and should remain, the land of opportunity to those who do not have it in their own country.

To see a dream to its fruition, to pursue happiness and to unlock closed doors are ideas which compose the American Dream. Even Michael Huffington, the Republican trying to best Democrat Dianne Feinstein out of a seat in the U.S. Senate, hired an illegal immigrant to watch the kids—and he supports Proposition 187!

But one should never insist that a part of the dream be given to them at the expense of taking that same dream away from others. Robin Hood was mythical; it is best that he stay that way.

It is starting to become a political reality that Republicans, in order to avoid being labeled as



partisan by the media, are forced to support the propositions of the opposite party. Admittedly, there are times when that would be appropriate. But when it comes to matters of principal which define the two parties, Republicans should support one another, despite the projected cost.

It is unlikely that a Democrat would support any Republican.

Admittedly, these examples are exceptions to the rule. However, Republicans and conservatives alike—especially those who

are running for public office—must recognize the principles of the group are larger than the group itself. Caving in to selfish political goals for gains, both short and long term, may be disastrous in the long run.

Standing by your principles does matter to the voters. Appeasement of the other side may actually be politically suicidal. Just ask Mr. Bush.

—Donovan Steltzner is an opinion columnist at *The Rebel Yell*.

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say that teaching at UNLV is not what it used to be.

Now the university code says that faculty should engage in community service, as long as it does not interfere with research and teaching. So community service has also been demoted.

As we flop around from one mission to another, we exclude and pass over people who have given their energies to their particular missions, and we've developed a backlog of internal animosity and resentment. For the faculty to be unified and work together, the three missions are going to be viewed differently.

I believe that research, teaching, and service are equal missions at a great university. UNLV can be one of the best universities in the world,

known for both its academics and its athletics. But before it can obtain such recognition, it must first state its missions and their relative importance.

Research is an important agenda item at UNLV. The federal grants brought into this university enrich the state economy and give us national recognition for significant research. As noted earlier, gifts from private donors enhance our research abilities and give us a chance to produce valuable information for our students. The University Foundation is devoted to academic excellence and can be a vital part of our future academic development.

—Dr. Blythin has been a teacher, administrator and resident rhetorical critic at UNLV for 25 years. This is his 19th campaign letter in *The Rebel Yell* for a more positive stewardship.