

# LAMORINDA WEEKLY

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## Letters to the Editor

Dear Editor:

Using poor judgment, the Board of Trustees of the Orinda Union School District is asking Orinda's voters to approve an astounding 32 percent increase in property (parcel) taxes.

In a March 2009 election, Orinda voters will be asked to raise the current \$385 annual school tax to \$509. To pass, the tax will need a two-thirds majority vote.

The proposed tax would be more palatable if the Orinda school district had asked for -- and received -- some concessions from the powerful teachers' union.

The union has traditionally opposed paying teachers according to the rules of supply and demand. Instead, the union supports an egalitarian pay system, in which all teachers are paid the same. (Teacher pay can be adjusted according to a formula based on a teacher's amount of college credits and length of service. However, pay is not based on market conditions.)

Under this egalitarian system, a history teacher is paid the same amount of money as a mathematics teacher. Thus, there is a chronic shortage of excellent mathematics teachers because mathematics teachers can obtain better pay in such places as Silicon Valley.

The proposed tax might be worth considering if teacher pay could be determined by free-market economics. Any business does this. For example, companies like Intel and Google pay a senior computer programmer more than they pay a janitor.

The tax does not offer a blanket exemption to Orinda's senior citizens. Seniors, most of whom live on fixed incomes, have seen their stock portfolios decimated in recent months. Moreover, seniors have to face sharply rising costs for food and medical care.

It's time for the trustees of the Orinda school district to stop asking voters for more money unless voters get something in return.

Orinda's voters should soundly reject this proposed tax.

Richard S. Colman  
Orinda

Dear Editor,

I am saddened to see Mr. Richard Colman's letter to the editor (that appeared in a different publication) regarding the Orinda Union School District's decision to place a parcel tax on the ballot. So often, these days, political opposition comes in the form of deceit and exaggeration rather than honest discourse.

On November 18th, Mr. Colman called me, as president of the Board of Trustees, and we shared a lengthy conversation about the unprecedented fiscal crisis facing our schools. I was very detailed in elaborating how both the current and the proposed parcel tax DO include senior exemptions for low-income seniors.

For Mr. Colman to write that "The Orinda school district could have - but did not - offer a tax exemption to senior citizens" is a deliberate falsehood, and he knows it.

In a time of enormous uncertainty, Orinda schools are facing huge budget cuts

this year, with even more crippling cuts proposed for next year. We must take action to preserve our quality educational programs. Though nobody likes to raise taxes, we can maintain local control over these funds to ensure they go directly toward essential academic programs.

Mr. Colman does a disservice to voters by ignoring the fact that this important measure offers protections for low-income seniors.

Riki Sorenson  
President, Orinda Union School District Board of Trustees  
Orinda

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Dear Editor,

My family and I are quite disappointed with the way Ms. Baker (Letters to the Editor, Nov. 26) mocked the children who were out in Lafayette expressing their support with 'no on 8' signs. These children you spoke of just so happen to be the sons and daughters of gay or lesbian parents! And would you believe they are very, very well aware what 'no on 8' would mean to their families. My female partner and I have been together 17 years with 2 boys, 14 + 10 years and yes, we even reside in Lamorinda along with many other gay and lesbian families. Our boys are brought up to show tolerance to others regardless of race, gender, economic status, sexual orientation and above all - Equality for all. Perhaps you should meet our sons and let them explain to you why they were out in Lafayette shouting their little hearts out 'NO ON 8'!

Oh, did you happen to notice all the children above highway 24 yelling 'yes on 8' - probably not.

Diane Druss  
Lafayette

Reach the reporter at: [info@lamorindaweekly.com](mailto:info@lamorindaweekly.com)

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