

**April 28, 2012. Patricia Sitze. *No justification for property tax levy* (Guest Opinion)**

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Let me introduce myself. I am an average Josephine County homeowner. I am not against property taxes, but I am against how this levy has been presented. Too often, the discussions have been negative projections of what will happen to our citizens if it is not passed. The commissioners, our sheriff and those who want this levy to pass are already laying the blame on our doorsteps if we don't agree with them.

A lot of us on fixed incomes are trying to find ways to obtain a good, healthy and fun lifestyle, within a very limited budget. Things are tight for us, and it's unfair to place additional burdens on only the property owners of Josephine County. One commissioner has even said, "The seniors will just have to suck it up."

Are you satisfied with the job the commissioners are doing or with the promises given by those running for those seats? If not, now is the time to say so.

Let's look at some of the issues:

Even if we pass the additional \$1.99 per \$1,000 of assessed property value levy, it will not prevent layoffs and keep the county at its current level of operation.

They say if we don't give them what they want, the county will fall apart. That's not the truth. They are working on a budget for fiscal year 2012-13 if the levy doesn't pass. The county will continue to function after June 30.

The commissioners and the candidates have said repeatedly that the citizens run Josephine County and that by our votes, we speak. So why didn't they listen to us in the past, and why aren't they listening now? The public has been involved by giving input, offering solutions and proposing new avenues, but the commissioners have not considered what the public has expressed.

We need to break the same old cycle of the commissioners coming back again and again asking us to raise our property taxes, so they can continue to spend. Until the commissioners do something different, we need to speak clearly with a "no" vote.

The Board of Commissioners approves the budget and makes the decisions of how, where and when to spend property tax money that we give them. They are responsible for the decisions they make. But too often, they complain that they don't have enough of our money. Wouldn't we all love to have more money in our budgets?

Just as we all are doing at home, now is the time to tell them to tighten the belt and trim the fat.

Secondly, businesses will suffer if this levy passes. They will have to raise prices, which will affect our ability to purchase goods and services in Josephine County. Some businesses may even fail. Look around and see the empty buildings with no prospects of filling them. This additional levy will not help our overall economic situation.

In the midst of all of this, the commissioners bought new chairs, funded several trips out of the county and are considering raising salaries. Why didn't they put all they could into the sheriff's budget, postponing some of these items?

They could also negotiate and renegotiate with the unions to cut salaries and benefits, reduce work hours, merge departments and use more volunteers.

Also, the sheriff has said he would use, to the best of his ability, the money given to him, and he would seek other sources of funding. Instead, he chose to accelerate his spending, starting in 2009.

I don't have all the answers, but the commissioners and the sheriff don't have the answers either. All they have proposed is to give them more of our money by paying higher property taxes for four years, and they will run Josephine County as it has been.

We can do much better. Stand with me and vote "no" on this levy.

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Editor's note: A "yes" on the levy Guest Opinion by the Josephine County commissioners was published Friday.