

On 3/13/2016 2:15 PM, Anthony Mantle Email

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Dear Mr Whalen,

After reading your opinion segment in the Daily Courier [March 8, 2016. Guest Opinion by Jon Whalen. The Grants Pass Daily Courier, *A Search For Public Safety Answers*] I felt I would like to offer some thoughts, for what they are worth. First, I do believe the people in Josephine County want a Public safety system, fundamentally a Sheriff's dept. & I am also sure that most people recognize the need to provide funding. The methods of funding I believe are the issue. The way the levies have been presented leaves one with the opinion that one is being scammed. I have lost count of the times I have read "the average home is assessed at \$200,000 & therefore the additional tax is only such & such (depending on the percentage per \$1000 of assessed value is being sought). Although this is a true statement it does not tell the real story. It does not state the min & max assessments in the county. One only has to look at the county website to see houses with assessed values 5, 6 & more times that average \$200,000. This means that two neighbors sitting next to one another, where one is going to pay a fraction of the levy cost as the other but get the very same service. I hear people say "Well if you can afford that expensive house you can afford to pay more for the levy". This of course is far from the truth. Some people live in modest homes but favor spending their money on motor homes, off road vehicles, boats etc & not put their money into their homes. Whereas someone else will spend their money on their home & not have the toys. Both could have identical incomes but the choice of how they spend it differs. Under our current system & thinking the person that chooses their home is penalized by the imposition of higher property taxes that go up every year compounding. The former of course does not pay property tax on their toys & the vehicle tax that they do pay is minimal compared to property tax & does not increase every year & also does not compound like property tax. To be fair I believe if a tax is the answer it should be based on ones adjusted gross income, where everyone pays their fair share according to their ability. The widow living solely on her Social Security income, which we all know is pittance, would pay little of nothing, whereas the well to do would pay more based on their income. I had thought that if the average house was assessed at say \$200,000 & if the levy equated to \$200 a year for that average house then may be there should be a flat tax of \$200 a year where everyone paid the same for the same service. However, I thought of the struggling widow who has lost her husband & consequently lost his Social Security check & is now having to pay the taxes on the house they both bought but with only one Social Security check, & I concluded the flat tax was not the answer for everyone. The tax based on income I do think is the fairest method.

The foregoing is if a tax must be assessed. Which leads me into another reason people are hesitant to approve a levy. People are more apt to part with some of their hard earned income when the ones requiring it of them do their fair share in the sacrifice. In the private sector one has to work until age 67 (I believe now) before they can retire & draw a full Social Security pension & if one is lucky enough to have an IRA or a 401K those investments fluctuate with the market. Conversely, those in the Public sector, whose income is derived from Private sector taxes, can retire much earlier, depending on how many years they have put in service, but mid fifties is not uncommon & they get their full pensions. Those pensions also in most cases are more lucrative than what people in the private sector get via their Social Security. Additionally, Public sector employees' investments through PERS have a guaranteed interest, until recently it was 8% but now is I believe 7.5% . The bottom line is when the market is down & the private sector is losing money they have to foot the bill to maintain the PERS investment guaranteed interest. The Public is not stupid they are aware that when the Commissioners skim off 10% of any levy passed, that goes towards maintaining PERS benefits. Now if the Public sector employees had to wait until age 67 to draw a full pension, just like the private sector, the county/city would save 10 plus years worth of salaries & be in a position to use that revenue to hire more employees (Hopefully Sheriff's deputies), and if PERS investments fluctuated with the market, again just like the private sector, the county/city would have more money to hire more staff. Neither of these items are asking more from the Public employees than the populace at large is already doing. The other subject that should be changed is the Government paying Public sector retirees additional money to help pay for their income tax they have to pay on their income. Nobody in the Private sector has ever been given money to pay for income tax on their pensions.

A third suggestion to provide the county/city with more funds is a simple one that again is already being done in the Private sector, & that is with regards to providing automobiles. For years now most companies in the Private sector have got away from providing automobiles for some of their employees. Instead they pay mileage to the employee that uses their own car for company business & the employee has to submit proof of such use that it is for company business. At the present it is not uncommon to see "For Government use only", cars on the freeway with their families aboard at weekends. I have seen on numerous occasions such Government cars in the parking lots at markets including Costco in Roseburg during business hours while the employee goes about their personal shopping. If this would be done the local Government could save on maintenance, repair, insurance & cost of replacement, & the present cars could be sold off, perhaps at a discount to the current users, either way they could bring in some more money instead of a constant outlay.

Everything I have mention with regards to the Public sector is being done in the private sector so it isn't really too much to ask. I know it would be challenging the Sacred Cow, but the populace at large know these things are happening & then when they are asked to fork out some more money when they see the UNSUSTAINABLE benefits the Public employees are getting & nothing being done about it, is it not unreasonable to understand why they are saying NO to levies?

My last item is the miserly 58 cents per \$1000 assessed value going to the Public Safety System we constantly have thrown down our throats. My property tax bill has almost ten times that going towards other things primarily Schools. Somewhere in time it was decided that only 58 cents was to go to the Public Safety System thereby making us one if not the lowest contributor to a Public Safety Department in the State. Had, at that time, the powers that be decided to give the \$2.00 per \$1000 assessed value we would not be in this predicament. Of course that would have meant a little less for the schools & very few people would be out there protesting at that. As it is the first duty of the the County is to fund the Public Safety Department, this is what should have been done & still should be done. Then the remaining tax dollars be divided up among all the other departments including the schools who could still get the lions share. As it stands the allocation of taxes collected is totally unbalanced to the detriment of the Sheriff, & that is not the fault of the taxpayers. Sadly I don't think the Sheriff could ever have sufficient deputies to protect & please everyone, but I do believe he needs enough to have a good presence & response team. Myself I would like to see on the voting ballot a re-evaluation of the current tax allocation & let the people decide where the money should be best used. After all it's their money & it's their county & should be given an opportunity to have some say in how that money is used.

I hope I haven't bored you with my lengthy dissertation, & hope something is of interest to you.

Yours respectfully,

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