

April 26, 2014. Jim Rafferty. CON: Proposal Would Cost More But Doesn't Add Patrols, Reduce Crime (Guest Opinion)

- Jim Rafferty. April 26, 2014. *How Should You Vote On Measure 17-66? CON: Proposal Would Cost More But Doesn't Add Patrols, Reduce Crime* (Guest Opinion). The Grants Pass Daily Courier. Grants Pass, OR.

The proposed May 2014 jail and Juvenile Justice Center (JJC) five-year tax levy, sponsored by the PAC Citizens for Securing our Safety (CSOS), adds \$1.19 per \$1,000 of assessed value to property owners' current taxes (a 205 percent tax increase). Estimates are \$7.5 million, \$8.1 million, \$8.3 million, \$8.6 million and \$8.8 million in new taxes over the five-year levy, or \$41.3 million total.

If your property is assessed at \$200,000, you would pay an additional \$238 annually, plus the 3 percent yearly amount allowed for increases in assessed values, about \$6 with the proposed levy, for a total of about \$1,220 through 2019. Then add the current tax rate of 58 cents per \$1,000 assessed value (\$116) plus the 3 percent annual increase (about \$3 per year) during the same five year period (about \$580), for a grand total of more than \$1,830.

Commissioner Simon Hare said recently, and Commissioners Walker and Heck agree, that \$2 million in general fund money would be available from "unallocated carryover," if the jail levy passes in May, for road patrols and the District Attorney's Office. He also said, "Our projected carryover for 2014-15 is nothing." But, no mention is made of a guarantee for subsequent general fund monies for years 2015-19. If this carryover funding is not available, will the road patrol manpower revert to the 2013-14 level of one or two patrol deputies?

If the proposed five-year levy passes, who benefits the most? The city of Grants Pass, since they have patrol manpower to fill the jail and JJC. If the jail remains fully occupied by city inmates, where would county inmates be housed? Would the increased court, parole and staff be limited by the same levy funding levels, clogging up the justice system? If the current justice system is strained now, what will it be like in five years?

One wonders why the levy was not initiated by the commissioners, the people's representatives, as taxing is a government function. But private citizens under the cloak of CSOS propose to establish a quasi-taxing authority without express approval or permission of elected representatives. The power to tax, if not satisfied, has the potential consequence of property confiscation, a real economic loss of property owners' worth and rights, all for the incarceration process only. Collateral damage from property confiscation results in loss of tax base and increased county liabilities which degrade over time, resulting in increased taxes on the remaining property owners.

Yet, no part of the proposed levy provides for the enforcement process known as sheriff's road patrols. How is it that lawbreakers are to be discovered, let alone detained or transported to jail, if there is no stated levy funding for additional deputies? Without express budget funding defined in the levy, are taxpayers to rely on our commissioner's promises to "fix" the lack of funds by diverting suddenly-found "unallocated carryover" or other "funds" after it passes?

Josephine County commissioners must take responsibility for this debacle since they decided to bank past O&C/federal school funds instead of funding 10 patrol deputies. Their only funding solution was easy pickin's property tax instead of other alternatives, such as an in-county-only lottery, where 10 winners of \$10,000 could be awarded to stimulate lottery sales, reaping net proceeds of several million dollars dedicated only to sheriff's patrols, instead of state coffers.

Another alternate road patrol funding option in the place of the proposed 17-59 Measure might be the following: Assuming 10,000 voters want to pass the proposed levy. And, in lieu of the levy, they would voluntarily pay an additional yearly tax to cover the average \$8,312,344 yearly tax levy, each would share the proportional cost of \$831.23. If that is the case, the current proposed levy would be paid for by the 10,000 volunteer tax donators, and the \$2 million would then be available for sheriff's road patrols.

JJC and jail funding is covered by those who want it, 24/7 road patrols would be funded and no new property taxes would be needed for five years or more. Fifteen deputies for road patrol could then be provided 24/7. At a cost of about \$100,000 per deputy per year, this would amount to \$1,500,000 of the \$2 million, leaving a difference of \$500,000 for the District Attorney and other needs, each year for 5 years.

The proposed levy has serious flaws: No dedicated, sustained funding for road patrols. No road patrols, no crime reduction. No crime reduction, no need for county taxpayers to pass the levy! Don't be surprised if a new levy for sheriff's patrol funding is next if the jail and JJC levy passes.

Vote NO on Measure 17-59. Don't vote for no rural road patrols and higher taxes.

Jim Rafferty is a member of the citizens group We're for a Constitutional Government, which is campaigning against the public safety levy on the May 20 ballot. Its website address is www.w4acg.com