

from our viewpoint...

Modern pirates terrorize high seas

What is wrong with this picture:

Pirates, really just children in leaky boats, carrying rifles and grenade launchers, rule the high seas. They seize ships and demand multi-million-dollar ransoms, which shipping companies and insurance firms are only too willing to pay.

Pirates lurk off the Horn of Africa, among the islands of Indonesia and the Philippines, even in a lake between Mexico and Texas.

When threatened, they murder their victims, then surrender. They know somewhere, they'll get a fair trial and maybe even wind up living in the free world.

The world's most powerful navies – from the U.S., China, England, Germany, Holland, France, all the great and small powers of the civilized nations – seem powerless to stop the pirates.

When pirates are caught at sea, they claim to be fishermen. Instead of blowing them out of the water, the world's navies just let them go. Their arms are seized and they get a slap on the wrist.

Their masters have more boats and more children to send out to sea, anyway. What do they care? They're making a lot of money.

Shipping companies resist arming their vessels. They claim it's bad for business, and besides, just having armed guards might not deter the pirates. Never mind that these kids attack tall steel ships from wooden boats and have to climb the sides to take over a freighter or tanker.

Government officials claim they can't track pirate vessels in an area so vast as the Indian Ocean, though that seems disingenuous in an era when spy satellites can see virtually anything that moves on the face of the globe and computers can be used to interpret images.

The situation is remarkably like the one that faced the American Navy and Marine Corps in their earliest years, when President Thomas Jefferson sent them to subdue the Barbary Pirates who preyed on Mediterranean shipping off North Africa. The Marines went ashore to assault pirate bases, as we may have to ask them to do in Somalia today.

In that era, more than 200 years ago, the pirates seemingly had all the advantages. Today, surely the world's great and most civilized nations can find some way to discourage and defeat vicious pirates. It must be done.

Our forces should be able to back up international law with military might. They should treat the pirates – and their warlord masters ashore – as the terrorists they are, showing no mercy and giving no quarter.

If arrests and trials will help, by all means arrest those willing to surrender. The rest, treat them with the same mercy they show their victims.

The civilized world cannot afford to be held hostage by pirates, whether off Africa, in southeast Asia or in Texas. Freedom of safe transit on the high seas is too important to all nations to be abandoned.

Unless the world reacts, there will be more killings, more kidnappings and more bloodshed. The time to make a stand it today, not after it's too late to save the next victims. – *Steve Haynes*



Timing important for passage of bond issue

To the Editor:

There are a number of very important aspects to this bond election for our School District. The timing could not be more important.

After careful review and ongoing community discussion for the past several years, the Board has made an historic decision to move to a two building concept. This two building concept will result in significant operational savings to the District.

This is extremely important to our District financially and will allow our students to continue to receive the quality education they deserve even as the State of Kansas is reducing funding for our students. In addition, there are inevitable improvements that need to be made to our facilities to ensure their longevity.

As with our own home improvements, the longer we put off repairs, the more expensive the repairs and improvements become when they are finally completed. The foundations to these building are strong and reliable. However, we need to make the commitment to move forward with this project to provide a 21st century learning environment for our students.

As with any improvement and renovation project there is a cost factor that needs to be considered very carefully. I am confident the Board of Education values the tax dollars it receives and consistently strives to provide the best possible education and learning environment with the resources available. They have worked hard to implement a plan of finance with the intent to minimize the interest expense and mill levy impact to District residents. If approved by voters, the District plans to issue a combination of Tax-Exempt and Qualified School Construction Bonds.



**your schools,
 community**

• guest column

The QSCB program was created as part of The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to assist school districts with financing improvement projects. The program is in its final year and has been widely successful among school districts in Kansas and throughout the country.

A school district receives a federal subsidy in an amount equal to the lesser of the tax credit rate and the interest rate on the bonds. As a result of this subsidy amount, the interest rate on the portion of the bonds to be financed as Qualified School Construction Bonds is near 0 (zero) percent. The District has secured \$5,469 million, and is first in line for any additional allocation that might become available.

The balance of the project not financed with Qualified School Construction Bonds will be financed with traditional tax-exempt bonds. The combined financing will be for a term of 20 years. The District's ability to use Qualified School Construction bonds saves District taxpayer's \$3,309,082 in interest expense compared to financing the entire project with traditional tax-exempt bonds.

It is very important to note the allocation is only available to the School District upon a successful bond election. If the election is not successful, the allocation will be returned to the State of Kansas and redistributed to other Kansas school districts. This is a great opportunity and allows our district to finance

the project at affordable interest rates, which results in minimizing our interest expense and mill levy impact.

Lastly, under the current school finance formula, the State of Kansas will pay 15 percent of all principal and interest payments due on the District's bond issues. This equates to approximately \$3,207,098 of the principal and interest payments due on the District's proposed bond issue will be paid by the State of Kansas. It is important to note our state has historically met 100 percent of its school bond commitments.

My wife and I were raised here, educated here and we have chosen to raise our three children here. This is an opportunity to do our part to give back to our community, and build something we can be proud of. Someone paid a little extra so we could go to nice schools and play in great facilities. If we do not come together and pass this bond, we will still be faced with maintaining too many buildings for our student population, which, by the way, will still cost a great deal of money.

It is true our state may cut funding to education in the future, so we see this as an even better reason to do this now. This is not a temporary fix. This is a well thought out solution we can begin implementing immediately.

We are all faced with an important choice on April 5th. Please take time to become informed about the project and financing. As evident, this project is important to our community and the future of education in our District. There is not a better time for us to consider this bond issue.

Bryce Cole
 Goodland

Our thoughts on the school bond issue

To the Editor:

We would like to state some of our thoughts about the Goodland School Bond proposal. We agree the school district does need to do something to address a declining school enrollment. However, we are not convinced the current proposal is the only solution.

West could be retained as is with improvements as needed. Central could become the Administration Building. However, that should not require intensively remodeling the entire building.

North definitely needs the air conditioning that had been proposed before the Bond issue became the school board's primary focus. Improvements could be made as needed.

The costs for operating and maintaining two small elementary schools or one larger elementary building will probably be about the same.

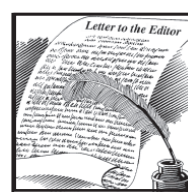
Splitting the school bus/automobile traffic into two locations rather than one would be much safer for elementary-age children.

Equipment, classroom, furnishings, computers, etc., could be replaced over time as needed. Facilities for Special Needs children could be added to North.

Combining grades 7-12 is workable but will require renovations, improvements, new equipment, etc., to the High School buildings.

Demolishing unused facilities should be tabled for several years so other possible uses can be explored. The current Administration Building was a home and could be sold as such. The mobile units could be sold to another school district. Grant Junior High is definitely a building that could be used for something – an extension for our museum, a meeting place for organizations, a bed and breakfast business, e.g.

Everything we do to maintain good, up-to-date school buildings will be costly. The school



**from our
 readers**

• to the editor

board might need to seek a mill levy increase that would be used exclusively for building maintenance, improvements, additions, etc.

To us this would be more cost effective than a more than one million dollar annual payment to fulfill the financial obligations for the current bond proposal.

Eugene A. and Amelia B. Lillich
 Goodland

To the Editor:

I highly commend Governor Brownback's stand on protecting the unborn. However, I am concerned about his plan to not protect our most vulnerable citizens who now reside at the Kansas Neurological Institute.

They have no voice, we must speak out for them. Most all of these citizens are severely disabled. Their mothers chose to give them life and are unable to provide a suitable home due to their severe developmental challenges. We as citizens should value their quality of life, and it should not be compromised to save money.

KNI is a facility which has been carefully designed to meet their patient's extensive physical needs. Many are confined completely to beds and wheelchairs. Others wear protective head gear or helmets to prevent injury to their brains. Many receive all of their nutrition through special feeding tubes. The staff at KNI are not only their caregivers – but parents. A deep emotional bond has developed over many years.

KNI is the only home they have known. The 24-hour round the clock care is essential to their well being and safety. Their needs cannot

be adequately met in foster care homes.

I have worked with these patients in the hospitals many times over the past 30 years. Most are very vulnerable to illness and require special care. I feel more hospital visits would be required if KNI closes. Most patients require such a high level of special care they must be admitted to ICU which is far more expensive to the taxpayers. Closing KNI will compromise patient care and increase patient mortality. Now is the time to write your congressmen, senator and governor, Ask them not to close KNI.

Let's not allow our most helpless citizens become homeless and displaced, only physiological and psychological damage will occur. Kansas government needs to look elsewhere to trim the budget.

Lisa Hansford ARRT, ASRT, LRT
 Topeka

where to write

U.S. Sen. Pat Roberts, 109 Hart Senate Office Building, Washington D.C. 20510. (202) 224-4774; web address — roberts.senate.gov

U.S. Sen. Jerry Moran, Russell Senate Office Building, Courtyard 4, Washington, D.C. 20510. (202) 224-6521; Fax (202) 228-6966.

U.S. Rep. Tim Huelskamp, 1st Congressional District, 126 Cannon House Office Building, Washington D.C., 20515-1601. (202-225-2715)

State Rep. Rick Billinger, Docking State Office Building Rm 724, Topeka, KS 66612. Phone (785) 296-7659, cell (785) 899-4770, home (785) 899-5824. E-mail rick.billinger@house.ks.gov.

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