

SILO – The Right Tax For The Wrong Reasons

I don't blame you if you can't bear to read one more article or letter about SILO, the School Infrastructure Local Option tax.

But what if I promised you a completely different perspective based on incisive and startling insights that are sure to challenge your deeply-held (if misguided) beliefs?

Unfortunately, such is not the case. My own opinions are invariably based on emotion, misrepresented data, second-hand stories, half-truths and a Ouija board.

For me, this issue boils down to the fact that I like the idea of people from out of town -who I don't even know – helping to pay for educating the kids of people from in town – most of whom I don't know either.

It is estimated that for every \$1.00 of sales tax paid by residents like you and me, an additional \$2.10 is collected from non-residents. Is this a great country, or what? Maybe someone can get to work figuring out a way for non-residents to pay part of my heating bill as well.

SILO seems like a ridiculously easy way to raise funds, but you have to wonder if this is the way the carnies feel at the county fair midway - conspiring to fleece the rubes when they make their weekly visit to the big city. You'll get over it.

Even though the schools really need the money, I can just hear a few of you saying (my hearing is pretty good), "It's not like they're going back to one-room schoolhouses if SILO doesn't pass." My considered response to that is, "Pish-posh, Mr. or Ms. Poopy-Pants."

I doubt that you're going to vote this Tuesday, anyway. According to statistics I recently fabricated with limited help from the Johnson County Auditor's office, only about 80% of Johnson county residents who are eligible to vote are registered, and fewer than 20% of those are likely to vote in this type of election in any case.

Math was never my strong suit (I blame the school district – can I sue?), but according to my calculations 20% of 80% equals (let's see, darn these decimals!) a .0016% chance that any of us are actually going to cast a vote.

Those of us who really do care about our community are going to make the supreme effort and spend 20 minutes of our valuable time on Tuesday making sure that unsuspecting shoppers in our fair county are extorted out of their fair share of our crippling tax burden.

To be fair, I have to admit that SILO isn't the perfect answer – it's just the better of two funding alternatives. I have the utmost respect for the well-intentioned but wrong-thinking paranoid reactionaries who rail against this tax, and are also willing to devote 20 minutes of their somewhat less-meaningful lives trying to cancel out the votes of us right-thinkers.

If SILO does pass, we'll be living in a totally alien world where the local school district doesn't have to scratch and claw for every penny it receives. That's a little distressing – I can tolerate only limited amounts of upheaval in my humdrum but happily predictable life.

I'm not totally insensitive to the argument that the rich pay a smaller percentage of their incomes in the form of sales taxes than do the poor. I may be revealing my math deficiency again, but I think the Law of Large Numbers dictates that the rich also pay a smaller percentage of their incomes in the form of Wild Turkey, lottery tickets, cigars, hookers and the other necessities of life as well.

I also kind of like the idea that every time a UI student buys a beer in a bar (or anywhere else), a penny or two flows into the school district's coffers. Not everyone realizes that beer is subject to sales tax – they could have used the slogan "Pass SILO and Buy Beer - For Our Kids."

As with all elections, it's your civic duty to hold your nose and vote for something, warts and all. I'm counting on you right-thinkers to get out there and beat those .0016% odds.

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