

Dear Editor,

Let me start off by saying that there is no good time for a school mill levy. Bear with me, and I'll explain why I feel we need to pass this one.

I moved to Glasgow with my family in 1959, and outside of a few years going to college, and four years in the U.S. Navy, I've never found a good reason to live anywhere else. I attended kindergarten through high school, found my career, married a great Glasgow gal, raised my family and retired, all right here in good old Glasgow.

I feel I have made my Glasgow bones, so to speak, and even though I have wondered, a time or two, just what in heck I'm still doing here, the answer is always the same. It's the people.

I've never seen more open, honest, and generous people anywhere. Yes, there are always exceptions, but just attend a fund raiser of some kind, and you'll see what I mean. I don't care if we're raising money for a sports team, helping out a person with health issues, or supporting walleyes or mallards, just try to outbid someone. Be ready to spend some pretty big bucks at a pie auction in Glasgow, Montana, because \$200 for a pumpkin pie is a bargain! And then the winner will often donate it back right on the spot! I love that about this town.

All that being said, however, school mill levies don't have as much luck around here. I completely understand. I lived four miles up Skylark Road on Cherry Creek for a decade or so, and when we moved back into Glasgow, I about fell over when I got my first property tax bill. Then it increased!

We now have the newest "X" factor... COVID-19. This pandemic is some pretty scary stuff, and has affected us all in some way. If you haven't actually gotten sick, you still may have taken a hit in the wallet. This will end, of course, but it's going to take awhile for everything to get back to normal. Wages for the working class have been fairly stagnant for years, but until lately if we wanted a job we could at least get one.

COVID-19 has caused our schools to be closed, which means that our lovable little rascal children are house bound. Some of us have found out how just important our school systems are, not only for teaching, but for the freedom to work that having our kids in school allows. Some of us also have discovered that trying to teach children is a little more challenging than we'd thought, and that good teachers are worth their weight in gold.

The wages for our school teachers have been more than stagnant. They've been pathetic. Did you know that of all the schools on the Montana High Line, Glasgow teachers have the second lowest starting salary? Of all the Class B schools in the state, Glasgow teachers salaries rank 90th out of 103 schools. This in Glasgow, where even though we are the county seat, have a well-staffed hospital, railroad and utility jobs, Fort Peck Reservoir, good farming and ranching land, and many other sources of employment, our school teacher salaries are a disgrace, especially considering the importance of the job.

And what are the repercussions of this, you ask? Why should you care? Well, that's simple. As of the writing of this letter, we've recently lost three teachers who have taken jobs in Wolf Point. Even paying for gas for the 100 mile round trip five days per week, they clear more money than the teachers working in good old Glasgow. We're losing quality, experienced teachers because they can't afford to work for Glasgow Public Schools.

We have to consider the quality of the schooling our kids are getting. We have great teachers in Glasgow, but a reduction in the number of them will only increase the number of kids in each classroom, and even the most talented teacher can only do so much. We need to make our schools a more attractive place to

teach so that we can retain these people, and hopefully hire more.

We will survive, and learn to live with COVID-19. But the need for quality schooling for our youth is something we will never escape. There is nothing more important to our youth and to society than good education. We have to prepare for, and have faith in, our future.

A few failed school mill levies ago, I was talking to my old seventh grade science teacher. He noticed that a proposal to build a new prison had been approved. "Well, that figures," he said. "If you don't have good schools, you're gonna need more jails." Yes, a tad dramatic, but still food for thought.

It may not be a good time for a school mill levy, but do we have a choice?