

I am writing to encourage you to vote on May 7 for borough **Proposition A**.

In September 1956, I began kindergarten in the basement of the log Presbyterian Church on College Road. I continued my education in Fairbanks graduating from the University of Alaska in 1974. My parents and others of their generation provided me and every other child in Fairbanks with an excellent public education, including choir, band and orchestra beginning in elementary school. They provided this without the benefit of oil money.

How did they manage that? They did it by living within their means and taxing themselves.

My generation hit the sweet spot — oil wealth took away the income tax my parents had paid, gave each of us an annual dividend and afforded my children an excellent public education. Twenty years ago, I was approached by a young man after a Fairbanks Symphony Concert. He was a physician, considering a move to Fairbanks and was interested in our public schools. At the time, I could recommend them without reservation. Our classrooms were not crowded, and we offered choir, band, orchestra and art beginning in the elementary grades. Confident in Fairbanks' education system, Drs. Andrew and Jaqueline Cox moved to Fairbanks with their young family and have contributed greatly to our community with their medical care and community involvement.

Unfortunately, over the past 10 years, state and local support for our schools has fallen precipitously, resulting in a mass exodus of researchers, doctors, educators, and other professionals from our community. We are beginning to experience the effects of this exodus. Try to make an appointment with a doctor in town, you may face a long wait. My company, Great Northwest, and every other contractor in Alaska is scrambling to find skilled labor and well-educated managers. A diminished education system is the trail head for a path to man camps, communities devoid of the arts and learning, and the professionals they attract.

While public education is in challenging times, there is a solution. Fairbanks and Alaska do have the resources to provide our children with excellent educations.

Fairbanksans can vote for **Proposition A**, allowing for a \$10 million increase to the borough's maximum allowable tax revenue. And the State of Alaska can reduce the Permanent Fund dividend and increase funding for education. The success of spending one's money on education is evidenced in Texas, where using their oil wealth to educate their people has created a strong economy that attracts professionals who further bolster the economy. The key to Texas's success, a superior education, is not a secret. My internist learned of it and has moved there.

Fairbanks needs to return to a well-funded educational system that provides all our children with an excellent education, not just the children who have access to charter and private schools. We can reach this goal with the community's support of **Proposition A** and with an increase in the State of Alaska's Base Student Allocation made possible by a reduction in the Permanent Fund dividend.

Support our community's future with a vote for **Proposition A**.