

Remember Me

Albuquerque Journal

Rejecting APS bonds won't solve district's problems

By [Pauline Artery / Albuquerque Interfaith Leader](#)

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The writer of the editorial that appeared on page 5 of the Jan. 5 edition of the Albuquerque Journal provoked a good deal of thought and created several points of agreement.

There have indeed been in the writer's words, "bad APS decisions." Failure to do a background check on Jason Martinez comes to mind, as does a pattern of using secrecy and buyouts to solve administrative personnel problems.

Several cases of what appear to be questionable use of district funds were cited in the editorial. The writer assured us that the investigation into those instances by Journal reporters was done with diligence and strict adherence to the facts.

In addition to points of agreement is the recognition that the writer has a right to his or her opinion.

What is troublesome is the connection between the upcoming bond election and the implied solution to the problem of Albuquerque Public Schools leadership making bad decisions.

Though in the writer's own words, "It hardly seems right to force school children to attend class in 50-year-old buildings with leaking roofs," the writer goes on to say, "How else do you get the adults' attention?"

The problem with selecting the writer's implied solution is four-fold.

First and foremost is the unfairness of punishing our children and their teachers for decisions made by APS leadership.

Second is the economic factor. The bond issue election will ask voters to approve a \$576 million package, which will allow for educational facility renovation, restoration, and renewal, as well as upgrades to security and technology.

Every school within a cluster will benefit, as will the surrounding communities.

And, consider the impact on the construction industry in Albuquerque. If the bond election fails, construction companies stand to lose 30 percent to 35 percent of their business.

Third, the writer did not mention that those responsible for bad decisions are not the ones responsible for determining the projects and the costs involved. Instead, an independent panel of community experts took on that responsibility.

At the end of the assessment phase, the projects were listed in order, with the worst or most critical at the top of the list. Selection was not political. Importance was determined by need rather than by which project might be the favorite of someone powerful.

Finally, as to the cost to taxpayers, passing the bond issue will not raise taxes by one cent! Not passing it will result in patch and paint, which serves only to mask, not solve problems. Eventual costs very well could be passed on to taxpayers.

As to the question of accountability, experience from the bond election of 2003 provides some assurance. As the writer mentioned, the 2002 bond election failed. As a result, another bond election was scheduled and the leadership of Albuquerque Interfaith chose to take on the task of getting people to the polls.

The result was the highest voter turnout to that point, and the bond issue passed. Shortly afterward, it became apparent that then Superintendent Winston Brooks wanted to use some of the money to construct a teacher training facility that had not been part of what voters had approved.

Albuquerque Interfaith leadership stepped in and were able to defeat the attempt to go against how voters expected the money to be used.

This year is no different. Albuquerque Interfaith will be out in force, not telling people how to vote, but encouraging them to let their voices be heard.

It will not end with the election. Albuquerque Interfaith has a reputation for holding community leaders accountable for their actions.

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