



Wednesday, September 03, 2008

## HERMISTON

# Board votes to oppose Measure 58

*Initiative would limit amount of non-English instruction*

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The Hermiston School Board made its opinion of a proposed state limit on non-English instruction clear Tuesday night, voting unanimously to oppose the idea.

Measure 58 aims to limit the amount of time non-English speaking students could be taught in their native tongue. Under the measure, which was drawn up by Oregon activist Bill Sizemore, students in grades K-4 could receive a maximum of one year of non-English instruction. Grades 5-8 would be allowed 1 1/2 years and grades 9-12 as many as two years.

Many educators have spoken out against the idea. The school board echoed that sentiment Tuesday before voting.

"This measure goes against the very core of what we are as educators," said board member Phil Hamm. "I'm firmly against this ballot measure."

Board Chairman Dave Drotzmann said the measure also would limit school districts' ability to adapt to their own students' needs, instead applying the mandate across the board to all groups. Though many districts teach at least a partially Hispanic population, others also deal with different groups such as Russian and Chinese students, he added.

The school board also voted to formally oppose a second initiative allowing higher deductions from residents' state taxes. Initiative 3 would increase the amount of federal income taxes Oregonians can deduct from their state taxes. The result, according to the school board resolution approved Tuesday, would slice the state's budget and reduce the Hermiston School District's funds by \$1.3 million the first year and \$1.8 million the next. The motion to oppose the idea passed unanimously.

In other business, Assistant Superintendent Wade Smith updated the school board on this year's district enrollment numbers. He said rising enrollment has put both middle schools and four of the district's five elementary schools at capacity. The district now transports some elementary students to Rocky Heights Elementary School, the only one not yet capped, he said.

Early estimates this year were formed by actual attendance numbers the first week - what Smith called the "whites of their eyes" count - and showed an increase of 88 students from this time last year. Though the district counted 4,747 students at the end of last month, Smith estimated that total to reach between 4,800 and 4,900 before registrations end.

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