

Argument Against Measure J

Californians pay higher taxes than citizens of most other states. Fresno, Madera, and Merced county residents also live with high unemployment and low incomes. While we support education, Measure J represents a massive public debt citizens will be paying for the next 40 years.

Californians are unaware of their accumulated school bond debt. According to the California Policy Center, from 2001 to 2014, voters approved borrowing \$110.4 billion in local funding. Voters also approved \$35.8 billion in three statewide bonds for **a total of over \$146 billion for school construction projects.**

We are already paying for Merced College's 2002 bond, and the college still has more than \$15 million available from its current bond. This new \$247 million bond is a financial burden on citizens who are currently paying for 20 Merced County school bonds representing hundreds of millions of dollars of debt.

According to Merced College's tax rate statement: "the best estimate from official sources of total debt service, including the principal and interest, that would be required to be repaid if all the bonds are issued and sold **will be approximately \$617.3 million.**" This is the true cost of Measure J.

Merced College hasn't demonstrated how this bond will improve student success. In fact, the college recently lost \$3.8 million in state funding because students aren't meeting state-mandated performance measures.

Merced College hasn't demonstrated the need for this massive bond. From 2009-2018, its total enrollment decreased by 12 percent. Nationwide research shows college enrollment decreasing for years. The college hasn't demonstrated a rising student demand to justify this overpriced bond.

While losing millions of dollars in state funding due to decreasing enrollment and poor student performance, the college is attempting to shift the funding burden to local taxpayers.

We support education, but this bond won't improve student success.

/s/ Joe Scoto, Merced County School Board Member/ Farmer
/s/ James A. Abbate, Restaurant Owner
/s/ Sharon E. Rucker, Attorney
/s/ Jeannette Benson, Educator (Retired)

FILED

DEC 09 2019

FRESNO COUNTY CLERK
By Fred [Signature] DEPUTY