

Support COCC bond to expand capacity

Published: October 16, 2009 4:00AM PST

For only \$2 a month from the average homeowner, Central Oregon can make a crucial \$53 million education investment in the region's future.

The ballot measure set to go in the mail today is for Central Oregon Community College. If it passes, it will raise some \$41.5 million. That contribution would kick in an additional \$11.5 million from the state to help COCC grow.

There's little doubt COCC needs to expand to meet demand. Enrollment has gone up by 45 percent over the past two years. Classrooms have been added. Instructors have been added. COCC still has not managed to keep up. Students can't get into the classes they want. They want to train for better or new jobs, and there just isn't room. The nursing program, for instance, has had to turn away as many as 100 students a year.

The bond will be used to build additional capacity. In Bend, it would mean a new health and science building to train nurses and other professionals. In Redmond, it would mean a new education technology center. Madras and Prineville would get additional facilities so that some students can at least begin their educations without long commutes. Other existing facilities will be renovated.

All that for about \$2 a month for many. The bond would cost property owners 12 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value, which is usually much less than the sale value of a home. A home that was appraised at \$200,000 would pay about \$24 a year if the bond passes.

There's no good time to raise taxes. A recession is a less good time. But there are good reasons why groups like the chambers of commerce in Bend, Redmond, Jefferson County and many other groups and individuals have endorsed the bond.

It creates jobs now, with \$53 million spent on new construction. And by providing opportunity for Central Oregonians striving to better themselves, it builds a better future for us all.

Please vote for the COCC bond.