

gin to distribution, in the spirit of full transparency.  
**Brett Ridgway**, Chief Business Officer, D38  
**Ron Schwarz**, Treasurer, D38 Board of Education

### Honor and integrity

Having served in the Air Force, I feel I have the ability to speak to service to country and integrity. I want to thank the D38 Board of Education, and our fantastic teachers, staff, and leaders who worked through the hardships of COVID, moving the district forward, all while being paid at least 10% less than their counterparts in surrounding districts.

We have the opportunity to honor their service to our area, and to our students, by voting yes on 4A. Thanks to their efforts, hundreds of students graduate safe and sound every year, extremely well-prepared to become contributing members of our community, whether they go into the workforce, serve in our nation's armed forces, or go on to college or trade school.

Our community has a lot to be proud of, and our educational system is chief among that list. I urge you to vote yes on 4A. I've seen this called a "reasonable ask," and I believe it is. A home that sells at about \$700,000 will be assessed at around \$35,000 by the El Paso County Assessor's Office, and that home would see a tax increase of about \$260 per year. That's just over \$21 per month.

That is more than worth it, and I know our teachers deserve it. After more than a decade of public education being underfunded by the state, our neighboring districts are able to pay their teachers and staff more because their communities have stepped up and passed additional local funding measures. It's time for Monument to show that we value the integrity, service, and performance of our educators and to do the same. Vote yes on 4A!

**Amy Shertzer**

### Vote no on District 38 mill levy override

I have been involved in school finance in Colorado for over 40 years and oppose the mill levy override proposed by District 38. This is a 7.450 mill levy increase forever on your property tax with no cap on how much tax can be raised in the future. The \$258 per year on a \$500,000 home is based upon your current valuation. Your valuation will be reassessed in 2023, 2025, and every two years thereafter. Current valuations lag 18 months behind the actual market. Your valuation will increase significantly in 2023 and subsequent years due to the significant increase in home prices. Your valuation goes up, your taxes go up beyond the estimate provided by the district! In addition, salaries in a district reflect the priority placed on salaries compared to other items in the district. Starting pay is a poor indicator of district salaries, as every teacher union wants the majority of salary increases to go to experienced teachers. As this is allowed to happen, beginning salaries suffer. Also, has the district reduced staff if they lost 400 students? Use that salary savings to increase pay for the remaining teachers.

The State of Colorado under Amendment 23 owes districts approximately \$500 million in withheld payments. Before local taxes are raised, the Legislature needs to forget spending millions on programs from wildfires to homelessness until districts are made whole.

Vote no to continually increasing taxes!

**Don Smith**

### Support mechanisms only go so far

I am a big fan of our D38 teachers and staff, and like many others, I support them a lot. I donate my time and hard-earned dollars in various ways to help our district. As a community, however, we can only support them so much and then it just isn't enough. We just can't make up for compensation that is so much better in other districts that are competing for our staff.

These past few years it's really become clear to me that despite all we do, whether it's clearing teacher wish lists, donating food for teacher appreciation, volunteering at a school, or waving "We Love Our Teachers!" signs, it can't make up for nor compete with the growing compensation that the surrounding districts offer.

Employees have to make real-life decisions that affect them and their families. Starting teachers in D38 make well under \$40,000 per year. The average D38 teacher can make much better money (in fact, \$5,000 to \$10,000 more every year) by joining Douglas County or D20, and the drive is not that much farther.

It used to be that after a while teachers would be somewhat "stuck" in their district because other districts would only honor up to 10 years of experience if a teacher were to transfer. But now, because of the shortage of teachers across the country, they can pretty easily switch districts and maintain their tenure. The old rule is out the window and D38 is sadly not competing.

We need to invest in our teachers and support staff through 4A to close that gap. 4A will benefit all of the D38 schools in our district, even Monument Academy. For my home, this will cost me \$258 this year. I'm voting yes for the huge benefit this gives us as we compete to remain one of the best districts by retaining our great staff and filling vacancies.

**Crystal Starkey**

### District needs more money, not less!

I want to thank Mr. Araje for pointing out (if it's true) that Lewis-Palmer District 38 has lost 400 students and that they are therefore getting less money! That is the very reason that they are asking for more money.

I am not sure which school he is talking about that

would only have 400 students. His solutions of consolidating and reducing staff are utterly ridiculous.

It was good of him to also point out that Lewis-Palmer District 38 has been one of the top-5 school districts in the state for the last 10 years! I am sure that everyone in this area would like to keep it that way. The only way to do that is by hiring top-notch teachers, and that will not happen if you have the lowest salary schedule in the area. Now it is hard to hire the best teachers or even keep them when they can go to a nearby district and make considerably more money. We are getting the first-year or lower-quality teachers that other districts are turning down. Does this tell you anything?

How about the negative signs that are posted around town about the MLO? Slush fund? Waste of money? Sequels? It is very plain to see by reading the information about the MLO to see exactly where the money is going.

Waste? What is more important than the education of our youth?

Sequels and who likes them? I don't know where that is coming from, but I really liked the sequel to Top Gun!

We are the most affluent school district in the state and are paying our teachers the lowest salaries. What is wrong with that scenario?

Let's buck up and put our teachers where they deserve to be paid!

Vote yes on the MLO.

**Richard Stewart**

### Yes on 2D for Palmer Lake's future!

The Palmer Lake Board of Trustees is proposing two ballot initiatives. Question 2D involves the sale of recreational marijuana. Medical sales already exist; taxed at a low rate per the Colorado Legislature. Question 2C is a multi-tier mill levy question, which would institute a 30-mill levy if marijuana does not pass, and a 15-mill levy if it does. But MJ funds from the first initiative will come from recreational purchasers, not from your own pockets. If MJ fails and the mill levy does pass, our seniors on a fixed income might not be able to absorb the property tax increase and could lose their homes, as the senior property discount only applies to the first \$200,000 of their home value. MJ is legal for adults to use, possess, and grow everywhere in Colorado. Sales would be in our current medical locations, limited to only two stores. Legal retail sales have proven to hinder illegal sales that often target children. A no vote supports black market activity. Unproven concerns about police safety, or "ruining lives," would have already come to fruition as adult-use cannabis is here to stay. Our police have issued no citations for MJ odor, ever. By state law, you cannot keep MJ out of Palmer Lake. Denying local rec sales only hurts our overall fiscal health. MJ is no longer a moral issue, a source of fear, or a dangerous narcotic. Voting no merely gives our MJ sales tax income to another town. Citizens who don't want the town to have this money don't want better roads, improved drainage, wells, or infrastructure. Are you prepared to shoot yourself in the foot because you need a new pair of shoes? Vote yes on 2C/2D and ensure PL has a future.

**Karen Stuth**

### Teachers are fighting for survival

It has been said before, and it will be said again: Teachers across this country are fighting for the very survival of their profession. They work long hours, and with take-home pay that does not align with the value our country should place in each of them as contributors to the success of our students across this country.

In our state? Our teachers are fighting even harder. Recent studies showed that Colorado teachers earn 36% less than other college-educated workers. This is the worst gap in the country!

In our district? Our teachers are fighting even harder than those across our state to just survive. Lewis-Palmer School District 38 is underfunded, and as a result it is forced to compensate teachers by an average of 10% less than the surrounding districts. All districts to the north and to the south of D38 pay thousands more for their teachers and support staff.

I have witnessed this firsthand as a community member, as a teacher, and as a parent of students who have

gone through our district. I see teachers applying for food stamps, working second jobs, donating plasma as they struggle to make ends meet. We must do better as a district and community to invest in our people, our teachers and support staff, all of whom invest everything they have in our children.

You can be an integral part in the effort to erase just one of these factors I mentioned, that is the local community factor, by voting yes on 4A, and showing you value our local educational system from the teachers and the support staff all the way to the students, each and every one of them across this district.

**Christine Thomas**

### Approve 4A

No one ever wants to increase taxes, but the issue of our teacher pay disparity between D38 and our neighboring districts has reached a critical juncture. D38 needs to approve 4A on Election Day to keep our education strong as well as our property values high.

My family moved here nine years ago, and we paid more for a home in D38 because of how strong the schools were. If we moved here today, we would now choose D20 or D12 for our place of residence. Our property values will go down as the district continues to become a less desirable place to live for families.

Currently teacher salaries in District 38 are 10% below the average in the Pikes Peak Region, which has led to an annual teacher turnover rate over 26%, according to the Colorado Department of Education. Our teachers can now make close to 10K more a year for driving an additional few miles to a neighboring district. New teachers in D38 are paid just over \$37,000 per year, which is the lowest in the region. D20 starting salaries are between \$45,000 and \$52,000. Why would anyone choose to teach in D38 schools given this pay disparity?

Our high schools have slowly dropped in rankings by the U.S. News & World Report to 70th and 39th in Colorado. Our district, once ranked among the top 10, has dropped to 13th best in the state.

The small tax increase from 4A will provide a salary increase just to get our teachers paid in the middle range. This tax increase will pay for itself whenever you go to sell your home. How can we not support our amazing teachers who have gone years now being so underpaid, and keep our home values strong?

**Maria Williams**

### Yes on 4A

I am writing in full support of the district's MLO to increase teacher and support staff pay. While deciding whether or not to go back into the field of education five years ago after staying home with my kids, I researched different districts' pay scales. I was shocked at how little D38 paid their teachers compared to neighboring districts (Douglas County and D20). Since moving to Woodmoor 4.5 years ago, I've been amazed at the quality of our school staff, who continue to keep our district exceptional, even with the lack of professional pay and sometimes, respect, from the community they serve. To give a little perspective, as an eighth-year teacher with a M.Ed. plus 45 additional graduate credits, I would make \$50,869 in D38. Based on the pay scales I was able to access, I would make \$7,000-\$9,000 more in other districts in the Pikes Peak region. If I drove 30 minutes north of Monument, I would make \$25,000 more! This MLO will also increase pay for all support staff, who are often the unsung heroes of our schools. D38 teachers educated our kiddos through the "COVID year" with probably the closest thing to a normal school year that any child in the country received. That feat alone earns my vote to increase salaries. For years our teachers have been doing more with less, and at some point, something has got to give. Several of our favorite teachers left the district over the last few years, and there is no doubt that will continue if salaries remain below average. Our teachers are not average. They are exceptional. The least we can do is get them on par with other nearby districts. It's been 23 years since the last MLO passed. It's time!

**Melissa Zeidman**

### Between the Covers at Covered Treasures Bookstore

## New fall releases from your favorite authors

By the staff at Covered Treasures

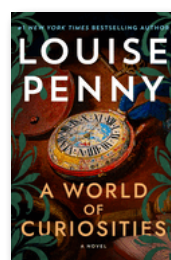
*"Chief Inspector Gamache says there are four sentences that lead to wisdom: I don't know. I need help. I'm sorry. I was wrong."*—Louise Penny

Settle into fall with a new book from a favorite author:

#### A World of Curiosities (Inspector Gamache #18)

By Louise Penny (Minotaur) \$29.99

A young man and woman have reappeared in Three Pines after many years. But to what end? As Gamache works to uncover answers, a letter written by a long dead stone mason is discovered, describing his terror when bricking up an attic room. When the room is found, a world of curiosities is exposed. In the unsealing, an old enemy is released into their world; into their lives; and into the very heart of the Gamache's home. Release date Nov. 29



#### The Passenger

By Cormac McCarthy (Knopf) \$30

The Pulitzer Prize-winning author returns with the first of two volumes: *The Passenger* is the story of a salvage diver, haunted by loss, afraid of the watery deep, pursued for a conspiracy beyond his understanding, and longing for a death he cannot reconcile. In 1980, Bobby dives to a sunken jet. Missing from the crash site are the pilot's flight bag, the black box, and the 10th passenger. Look for *Stella Maris*, the second volume, on sale Dec. 6. The books can each be read as a stand-alone.

#### Lessons

By Ian McEwan (Knopf) \$30

From the Suez Crisis to the Cuban Missile Crisis, the fall of the Berlin Wall to the current pandemic, Roland Baines sometimes rides with the tide of history but more often struggles against it. His journey raises important questions for us all. Can we take full charge of the course of our lives without causing damage to others? How do global events