

## Editorial

# Vote yes on the Holy Cross Hospital mill levy

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The March 8 election ballot has a single ballot question: whether or not to pass a 1-mill levy for Holy Cross Hospital.

In regular lingo, that means raising taxes by \$1 on each \$1,000 of net taxable value of property in Taos County. Taos-ers don't need higher property taxes, but we cannot imagine our county without a hospital and the medical community it anchors. **We urge a yes vote on the mill levy.**

Taos County has a tradition of supporting Holy Cross. Voters passed a mill levy in 1991 to build the hospital. But as a tenant, Taos Health Systems is responsible for maintenance, and the building is in serious need of attention after years of cuts in government funding as well as what we argue were questionable decisions by past administrators.

We give the hospital's leadership, in particular CEO Bill Patten, credit for not resorting to scare tactics. And we appreciate that Holy Cross has asked for a mill levy that would expire after four years, thus providing an opportunity to demonstrate it can responsibly use our tax dollars.

This ballot question is not a rushed job, unlike one the hospital's previous administration unsuccessfully tried to push through years ago. Hospital officials have been talking with the county for more than a year about this funding option.

And to keep voters informed, Holy Cross has held numerous forums throughout the county while providing more information about its governance and leadership.

Let's be realistic. Hospital money spent on repairs, say a new roof, or an upgrade in medical equipment, would likely mean a reduction in medical services.

We don't want that.

Taos is a remote community even by modern standards. It is a long ride to hospitals in Española, Santa Fe and Albuquerque for those who need medical services — and for those who want to be with their ailing loved ones.

We are fortunate to have a hospital where our babies are born and our elders receive care.

And Holy Cross is a major employer, too.

Moreover, funding the hospital's maintenance and operations through property taxes is fairer than GRTs, which hurt the county's poorest consumers. For instance, those who spend \$10 in the town of Taos will pay almost another buck in GRTs.

Or consumers will opt to buy the same item online and not pay sales tax — not a practice that helps the local economy.

If passed, the proposed mill levy vote would affect residential — including those second homes that make up about a quarter of the county’s housing stock — and commercial properties, plus open land. There are options for low-income residents who are 65 and older. Those who farm their land can seek a tax-reducing exemption.

The mill levy, which would generate about \$5 million over the next four years, would certainly not cover all of the hospital’s repairs or equipment needs. But it would help.

Vote yes for the 1-mill levy for Holy Cross Hospital either during early voting, which ends March 5, or on Election Day. Keep medical care local.

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