

4A Local

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▲ If a Tacoma schools bond passes in February, the facade of Oakland High, built in 1902 as an elementary school, would be saved and the interior gutted. Photo taken on Wednesday, Jan. 22, 2020.

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BOND

the only one of its kind on the ballot. The brick facade of the building is on the City of Tacoma's register of historic places, meaning it must remain untouched during renovations, but the rest of the building would be gutted and built anew. If the bond passes, the cost to the average homeowner would increase \$6.79 per month (\$81.48 annually) for Tacoma schools. Tacoma voters have a history of passing school bonds, unlike its counterparts in more rural areas like Bethel School District, which successfully passed a \$443 million bond in 2019, its first since 2008. Bonds require a supermajority of 60 percent voter approval to pass. Tacoma voters last passed a school bond in 2011 at 70.71 percent approval. The \$500 million measure replaced or renovated 14 deteriorating neighborhood schools across Tacoma. Three of those projects are awaiting completion, with the Grant

Center for the Expressive Arts the most recent replacement this month. Oakland's future Principal John Jones takes a lot of pride in Oakland. Oakland was named a School of Distinction for raising graduation rates and test scores on a consistent basis. Oakland also is home to the district's first school-based health clinic, which more districts are investing in. There's a day care on site, and Jones would like to see a preschool open one day, too. At the same time, there are things that need fixing, Jones said. For one, the school isn't ADA compliant, with only stairs to reach the upper levels. When it rains, the school has to bring in workers to squeegee the water off the flat roof. "The hearing isn't so well, so that makes it hard to learn in a cold environment," said Oakland senior Fac-

harah Merrill. "It's pretty tough some days," Jones said. "It's hard to stay in those classrooms." At some level, Jones feels the distractions interfere with learning at Oakland, where students have varying backgrounds. Oakland operates differently from a traditional high school with an alternative schedule. Students can earn credits through work-based learning programs, online classes, independent study and volunteer hours. "I'm very proud of our students because they're very resilient. They've gone through stuff that people shouldn't have to go through, and yet they don't quit," Jones said. "I think we owe it to our students to have the best that we can offer."

Some students feel Oakland gets bad rap. "When I ask (students), 'What do people say about Oakland?' they say, 'Oh, we're the bad kids... and I know that's not true,'" Jones said. If the bond passes, junior Lady Evansona Pata likely will be long gone from Oakland before any renovations start, but she finds it important to fight for future students. "For other students, I think it might be nicer to be newer and more comfortable," she said. "Most of this is for future students, to help them have a better education and better environments to work in," added Merrill. Jones said an investment in a school is investment in the community, even for people who don't have kids. "I just think it would go a long way to tell those students, 'Yeah, we do recognize you. Yes, you do have a voice... You deserve the best that everyone has across the district,'" Jones said. Allison Merrill, 253-597-8507, @allisonmerrill

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BILL

pay court costs, restitution to victims, or fines and fees would not take voter eligibility away from a former inmate. "The bill's proponents argue that denying felons the right to vote discriminates against people of color who have been convicted of crimes, but victims of crimes are also predominantly people of color. The rights of felons should not be valued more than the rights of victims, regardless of their skin," he said in a statement. "Prison time, community custody and restitution are all reasonable penalties for our courts to include in a sentence. Punishment for a crime in Washington does not automatically end at the prison gate, so we should not restore voting rights for convicted felons until they have completed their sentences, including their period under [Department of Corrections] supervision and paying restitution to victims," Schoeter added. The Department of Corrections says an estimated 8,987 people who served sentences in state prisons are eligible to have their voting rights restored. Most individuals on supervision are sentenced to 12 months, but different offense types and sentencing alternatives can carry supervision lengths of as long as 36 months. The state prison system also has some convicted felons on supervision for life. Samuel Merrill, clerk of the criminal justice working group for the Olympia-based Quaker Voice on Washington Public Policy, said while after the Civil War and Reconstruction adopted laws targeting former slaves for felonies to deprive them of their

voting rights. The practice continued into the voter suppression laws under Jim Crow — "vestiges of which continue today," Merrill said. Supporters of the bill include the Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys, the state Department of Corrections, the ACLU of Washington, and Attorney General Bob Ferguson. Schoeter said at a legislative work session last year two convicted murderers spoke in favor of the proposal — one testifying by phone from a state prison and the other by submitting a written statement. "I should bother people who are backing a bill that Democrats seem to be fast-tracking this session. That tells me this bill is actually a step toward letting all inmates vote. Imagine allowing a block of people who have no ties to a community having influence over how much people pay in taxes or who is elected to serve us — even before they've paid their own debt to society," Schoeter said. Reached for comment, Kulerer said allowing state prison inmates to vote would be a logical next step. "Until someone can show me that there's a good reason to deprive someone of the right to vote because of the commission of a crime, then I will rethink that. But for now, I have seen zero evidence for that," she said.

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TRADES

miss you so much this hour. The case was featured in People magazine in 2017 and has been featured on several true crime televi-

sion shows. Over the years, detectives have followed up on more than 700 tips in Teclab's disappearance. Cadaver dogs have been used to search the homes of sex offenders and a small area in Point Defiance Park was dug up in 2010 after a man reported having a vision of where the girl was buried. Teclab had a quarter-sized birthmark on her buttocks and had skin discoloration on her face

as a child due to eczema. She also had asthma. Anyone with information is asked to call Tacoma Pierce County CrimeStoppers at 800-222-7119 (8477). Stacie Glover, 253-597-4653, @stacie_glover



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