

## BLS bond rating upgrade to save Central Oregonians thousands

by Bend\_Weekly\_News\_Sources

A1 to Aa3 upgrade for Bend-La Pine Schools attributed to sound fiscal planning and strategic long range planning

A Wall Street credit rating agency, Moody's Investors Service, raised its rating for the Bend-La Pine Schools (BLS) general obligation bonds to Aa3 today. BLS joins an elite few Oregon schools with a rating of this caliber. Moody's cited the area's strong economy, high real market value per capita, the Schools strengthening financial position and continuing growth, as well as other important credit qualities, for the upgrade. Moody's considered BLS operations, policies and fiscal results in their review. "This rating upgrade confirms that our hard work to build fiscally sound budgets and to deliver cost effective projects, including new schools, is being recognized at the national level," said John Rexford, assistant superintendent of operations for the Bend-La Pine Schools. "This elite rating distinguishes our bonds from others and should give bond investors another positive reason to add our bonds to their portfolios," he says. "Market conditions considered, this new rating could save us more than \$300,000 when the \$119 million school bond is sold in June," Rexford says the third party analysis validates to Central Oregonians that local tax dollars are being managed and used effectively to ensure students have what they need to succeed. "For example, in 2005 we refinanced some of the Schools existing bonds which generated a savings of more than \$12 million in savings to taxpayers," he adds. Rexford says that BLS holds the highest bond rating for a district located east of the Cascades and is one of just seven school districts in the state with an "Aa" range rating. Other districts with similar ratings are Tigard, Eugene, Hillsboro, Beaverton, Lake Oswego, and Portland. Oregon has 198 school districts. The new rating will be assigned to the Schools current bonds and as well as the \$119 million of bonds approved by voters in November of 2006. The bond sale is expected to take place as early as June 5.

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