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Together We Are Inspiring Life-Long Learners

February 8, 2022 Educational Programs & Operations Levy Replacement

Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the Levy for? How much will it cost?

A: There will be one levy measure on the February 8, 2022 ballot - An Educational Programs & Operations Levy. **This replaces an expiring levy and is not a new tax.**

The Replacement Educational Programs & Operations Levy (EP &O) helps fund the following:

- ◇ Early Learning support
- ◇ Nurse care
- ◇ Special education programs
- ◇ Student Transportation
- ◇ Professional Learning
- ◇ Substitute Personnel
- ◇ Salaries and Benefits
- ◇ Supplies and materials

If approved by voters, the Educational Programs and Operations Levy will be a variable rate that averages 45cents per \$1000 of assessed property value.

This will generate approximately:

- ◇ \$88,000 in 2023 *(estimated 45 cents per \$1000 of assessed property value)*
- ◇ \$99,000 in 2024 *(estimated 45 cents per \$1000 of assessed property value)*
- ◇ \$103,000 in 2025 *(estimated 42 cents per \$1000 of assessed property value)*
- ◇ \$106,000 in 2026 *(estimated 42 cents per \$1000 of assessed property value)*

In 2021, a property owner with an assessed value of \$500,000 is paying approximately \$340.00 annually. If the EP&O levy is renewed, this property owner would have an average decrease of approximately \$115.00 annually, or \$9.58 per month.

Q: How are tax amounts determined for property owners?

A: Each property owner pays a different amount of taxes because the assessed value for each property is different. **Index School District can only collect the amount approved by voters- no matter how much assessed values increase.** As more people move into the Index School District boundary, more property owners contribute to the total levy amount. This means that each property owner will likely pay less.

Q: Why are the levies important and what do they pay for?

A: Our local levies pay for critical needs that are not fully funded by the state. These include:

- ◇ Health and Safety (nurse care and safety measures)
- ◇ High-quality instruction (special education and staff professional development needed for providing high-quality instruction)
- ◇ Academic support for students
- ◇ Salaries and Benefits
- ◇ Technology and instructional materials

Q: Didn't the district receive emergency pandemic money? Why do we still need a levy?

A: School districts are receiving federal COVID relief dollars through the Elementary & Secondary School Emergency Relief Act (ESSER) to offset the cost impacts of the pandemic. These are not ongoing funds. They can only be used to cover expenses associated with the pandemic.

Q: The state has allocated more taxes for schools. Why are local levies still needed?

A: A portion of the property taxes which used to go directly to local schools now go to the state. The state redistributes those dollars back to school districts. Local districts can still ask taxpayers for a levy, but for a much smaller amount. Levy funding is still critical to pay for important needs not fully funded by the state (special education needs, nurse support, technology, curriculum materials, professional development training).

The state legislature increased state property taxes in 2018 with the intent of lowering the local portion of school taxes, not eliminating them. This is a step in the right direction, but it is not going to cover the cost of education because:

- 1) the state requires money to be spent in specific ways reducing local control of how funds are spent.
- 2) the state is not covering the full cost of special education, staff pay and benefits, transportation, teacher training, counselors, nurses, and other critical needs.

Q: What is the difference between a levy and a bond?

A: Levies are for learning and provide for the day-to-day operation of schools and programs (Think "L" for learning).

Bonds are for building and are financed over a long period of time. Bonds cannot be used to pay for programs or day to day expenses (Think "B" for building).

Q: Are tax exemptions available?

A: Yes, but you must meet certain criteria. For more details, visit the Snohomish County Assessor's website or call (425)-388-3540.

Q: I thought money from marijuana dispensaries is supposed to support schools. How is Index School District using that money?

A: School districts in Washington state do not see any direct financial support from cannabis sales. Unlike Colorado, which has a lower tax rate and spends most of its marijuana money on schools, Washington allocates a portion of its marijuana tax dollars to substance-abuse education and treatment programs. Most of these tax dollars go to the state's Basic Health Plan Trust Account. *(Source: WA State Office of Financial Management)*

Q: What percentage of "yes" votes are needed to pass the levy?

A: Levies require a 50 percent majority to pass.

Q: How can I vote?

A: The February 8th, 2022 special election is an all-mail election. Registered voters who live in the Index School District boundary will receive their ballot around January 21st, 2022. Ballots must be postmarked by Tuesday, February 8th, 2022. No postage is required to return your ballot. There is a secure ballot drop box in Index (near the town hall) 511 Avenue A, Index, WA 98256. The box is open until 8:00 pm on Election night.

If you are eligible to vote in Washington state, you can register to vote or change your registration right up to 8:00 PM on election day and still vote in the election. You can register to vote at: <http://www.sos.wa.gov>. (425-388-3444). Online and mail-in registration for all elections closes eight days before election day. We have a registration form at our website: indexschooldistrict.net