



**Resolution of the Board of Trustees
of the Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce
January 12, 2009**

A Resolution to Support Renewal of the City of Seattle's Public School Levies

Resolution

The Chamber's Board of Trustees resolves to support the renewal of two property tax levies that fund basic health and safety needs at every public school in Seattle, provide 23% of the school district's day-to-day operating expenses, and support basic educational programs in Seattle public schools.

Background

Voters will be asked in February 2010 to renew two expiring levies which provide essential funding for Seattle's public schools.

Proposition 1, also known as the capital levy, will provide \$270 million over six years to fund hundreds of basic health and safety improvement projects in Seattle public schools. The total amounts to be collected for each year will be \$45,000,000. The estimated levy rate per \$1,000 of assessed value begins at \$0.35 for 2011 collections and decreases slightly each year, ending at an estimated \$0.27 for 2016 collections.

Projects include, but are not limited to: waterline replacement, replacing worn-out roofs and heating systems; retrofitting and upgrading buildings for earthquake safety; energy efficiency enhancements; and replacing alarms and sprinkler systems to ensure a safe learning environment. The capital levy will also fund needed improvements to athletic facilities and technology upgrades that support teacher instruction, student learning, and will improve the efficiency of the district's administrative operations.

If voters approve renewal of the capital levy, Seattle's public schools will also receive \$2,000,000 in matching funds from the state of Washington to create vocational skills centers. The skills centers and related programs will help prepare those students who are not college-bound to enter the workforce after graduation from high school.

Proposition 2, also referred to as the operations levy, provides 23% of the day-to-day operating budget for Seattle Public Schools, and supports basic educational programs not fully funded by the state. If renewed, the operations levy will supply \$442.7 million to public education over three years. Estimated levy rates per \$1,000 of assessed value are \$1.07 in 2011, \$1.06 in 2012, and \$1.11 in 2013.

The funds provided by this levy help keep class sizes down by paying for teachers in every classroom, at every public school, in every part of the city. Funds from this levy also support the purchase of books and classroom materials that are a requisite part of a basic education.

Discussion

The majority of the 615 upgrades and renovations funded by the expiring 2004 capital levy have been completed, with the remaining projects scheduled to be finished by the time existing levy funds are spent. Without the ongoing support provided by renewal of the capital levy, Seattle's public schools will not be able to perform the critical maintenance, renovations and upgrades that provide students with a safe and healthy learning environment, including safe drinking water and clean air.

In addition, given the current state budget crisis, these levies are more important than ever in maintaining basic educational services in our public schools. Without these funds, the Seattle School District would suffer a massive budget shortfall that would undercut its ability to provide a basic education.

There is no organized campaign in opposition to renewal of the Seattle public school levies.

Conclusion

For the reasons listed above, the Chamber's Board of Trustees supports renewal of these two property tax levies. These levies fund essential maintenance and safety needs at every public school in Seattle, keep class sizes down by paying for teachers, provide nearly a quarter of the school district's day-to-day operating expenses, and support basic educational programs in all Seattle public schools.