

Election — November 6, 2012

## St. Vrain Valley Schol District RE-1J Ballot Issue



### League of Women Voters of Boulder County

*The League of Women Voters is not responsible for the accuracy or fairness of the arguments of either side.*

#### **BALLOT ISSUE 3A**

**ST. VRAIN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT  
RE-1J MILL LEVY OVERRIDE TO MITIGATE  
STATE FUNDING CUTS TO MAINTAIN  
TEACHER AND STAFF POSITIONS,  
ATTRACT AND RETAIN HIGH QUALITY  
TEACHERS AND STAFF, AND TO UPGRADE  
TECHNOLOGY AND EXPAND / ENHANCE  
EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION.**

SHALL ST. VRAIN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1J TAXES BE INCREASED \$14,800,000 IN TAX YEAR 2012 FOR COLLECTION IN YEAR 2013 (AND BY WHATEVER AMOUNTS MAY BE COLLECTED ANNUALLY THEREAFTER) FROM A MILL LEVY INCREASE NOT TO EXCEED 6.27 MILLS, AS DETERMINED ANNUALLY BY THE DISTRICT'S GOVERNING BOARD, THE REVENUES FROM WHICH SHALL BE USED FOR EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES (WHICH INCLUDES THE DISTRICT'S EXISTING SIX CHARTER SCHOOLS), SUCH PURPOSES TO INCLUDE BUT ARE NOT LIMITED TO:

MAINTAINING TEACHER POSITIONS AND REASONABLE CLASS SIZES,

ATTRACTING AND RETAINING HIGH-QUALITY TEACHERS AND STAFF,

UPGRADING TECHNOLOGY TO ENHANCE STUDENT LEARNING, AND EXPANDING AND ENHANCING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION (PRESCHOOL AND KINDERGARTEN);

SUCH TAX INCREASE TO BE AN ADDITIONAL PROPERTY TAX MILL LEVY IN EXCESS OF THE LEVY AUTHORIZED FOR THE DISTRICT'S GENERAL FUND PURSUANT TO, AND IN ACCORDANCE WITH SECTION 22-54-108, C.R.S., AND TO CONSTITUTE A VOTER APPROVED REVENUE CHANGE AND AN EXCEPTION TO THE LIMITS WHICH WOULD OTHERWISE APPLY?

#### **Major Provisions**

Referred to voters by the SVVSD board, the proposal would override the mill levy limit permanently to increase the district's general operating revenue. The override, to be determined annually, would not exceed 6.27 mills; first-year revenues would be \$14.8 million.

#### **Background**

School district funding in Colorado is a state/local partnership. Local property tax revenues currently supply 39% of the SVVSD budget—30% from the authorized mill levy + 9% from the permanent override which passed in 2008. A mill is \$1 per \$1,000 of assessed property value.

State equalization funds (by which the Colorado legislature attempts to equalize funding among school districts) currently represent 51% of the SVVSD budget. State law also allows a district to ask voters for a mill levy override; override funds do not affect a district's state funding. In 2010, the legislature increased the maximum allowable override from 20% to 25% of total program cost.

If this measure passes, the SVVSD would offer a property tax work-off program to persons who are 60 or older or disabled, as a way of partially relieving those segments of the population from the increased property-tax burden..

#### **Those IN FAVOR say**

1. The additional revenues from the mill levy increase will keep current numbers of school workers on the payroll, let classes stay reasonably sized, continue fine instructional programs, attract and develop quality teaching professionals, upgrade classroom technology and expand early childhood education.
2. State funding has been cut leaving the district no other options but to spend reserves and increase taxes in order to provide the same level of services.
3. We risk losing jobs in St. Vrain as employers are drawn away to other communities that offer a better education for students.
4. The district is sensitive to the community's economic concerns in that it is not asking for the maximum allowed mill levy.

#### **Those OPPOSED say**

1. In spite of the mill levy override passed in 2008, state standardized-test scores have decreased in the district compared to average state scores, evidence that funds are used inefficiently, for under-performing teachers, feel-good curricula and bloated administration.
2. The district needs to scrape by in these difficult times without more money, just as average taxpayers have to do. For instance, the district should cut administrative costs and refuse the demands of the union.
3. A higher mill levy will permanently lower property values in the district.
4. With no sunset clause in this override, voters have no opportunity to reaffirm or deny the district continued collection of taxes at the higher rate.

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