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# K I T S A P Daily News

  
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## NEWS

### SK voters to decide on renewal levy in February

By Britney Fletcher-West Port Orchard Independent • November 22, 2024 1:30 am



The South Kitsap School District Board of Directors Nov. 19 authorized a replacement Educational Programs & Operations levy on the ballot for Feb. 11, 2025.

If approved by voters, the four-year \$133 million levy would secure funding for district programs and services through 2029, without raising property tax rates. Currently, the EP&O levy is set to expire at the end of 2025.

If passed, the levy rate for property owners would be \$1.94 per \$1,000 of assessed value for each year through 2029. The current levy had collection rates of \$2.50 in 2022, \$2.11 in 2023 and \$1.94 in 2024 and 2025.

Lee Marchisio, legal counsel from Foster Garvey PC, presented details about the levy during the meeting. He explained that it is designed to cover gaps in state funding, which provides a basic education but does not fully meet the needs of students. The proposed levy would generate funding for areas such as special education, arts and music, after-school activities and safety. It also supports security measures, student technology and early learning initiatives—areas not covered by the state's general education budget.

Public comments highlighted broad support for levy renewal. Martha Robinson, a retired special education teacher, spoke passionately about it.

"I feel strongly about the passing of this levy, like many others," Robinson said. "I lived in a school district many years ago where a state measure passed and shut down all extracurricular activities. So, I feel strongly that when we have an opportunity to add to our funding for special programs—like security, transportation and special education—we should be willing to pay for that because it's all about the kids."

Dave May, another community member, reflected on his upbringing in a farming family and how school budgets supported student opportunities. He recalled his father's successes in agricultural competitions, made possible by school funding. May also stressed the importance of offering comprehensive educational opportunities, particularly foreign language programs. "The minds of children are wide open to languages, and they start to close down the older they get," he said.

Without renewal, the district would face significant funding cuts, potentially impacting the quality of education and services offered to students.

If approved, the district plans to use the funds to support educational programs that directly benefit students, ensuring the continued provision of a comprehensive education that prepares them for future success.

School board members expressed unanimous support for the resolution. They also acknowledged the need for community outreach to ensure voters understand the levy's significance.

School board member Kate Espy reminded the community that this is a continuation of existing funding—not a new tax. "It's imperative that we keep this renewal. It's not extra; it's just a continuation of what is already active," Espy said.

To provide voters with more information, the district plans to hold public forums and Q&A sessions.

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