

EDUCATION

South Kitsap School District putting 4-year operations levy on February ballot

The district's current educational programs and operations levy expires at the end of 2025.

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South Kitsap school board directors this week approved a resolution to put a four-year educational program and operations (EP&O) levy on the ballot for the Feb. 11 special election. The levy would replace South Kitsap's current four-year levy that expires at the end of 2025.

Board directors Andy Brandon, Kate Espy, Megan Higgins, Brian Pickard and Jay Villars voted "yes" on the resolution during Tuesday's regularly-scheduled meeting in Port Orchard. The board is scheduled to appoint "for" and "against" levy committee members — responsible for writing statements in the Kitsap County local voters' pamphlet — during its Dec. 4 meeting.

EP&O levies supplement the state's basic education allotment to operate and maintain schools and help school districts pay for classroom support, special education, counseling, transportation, food service, arts, athletics and activities, security and utilities. South Kitsap School District spokesperson Amy Miller, EP&O levy funding makes up roughly 16% of the district's annual budget for the 2024-25 school year. That equates to \$29,597,916 of the \$189,098,296 budgeted revenue.

South Kitsap's new levy measure, should it receive voter approval (50% plus one vote is required for passage), would seek to collect up to \$133 million over four years: \$30,990,823 in 2026, \$32,313,252 in 2027, \$33,950,830 in 2028 and \$35,690,540 in 2029. The estimated levy rate would be \$1.94 per \$1,000 of assessed value each year for property owners.

South Kitsap's current four-year levy, which passed in 2021 with 51.4% approval, featured collection rates of \$2.37 in 2022, \$2.11 in 2023 and \$1.94 in 2024 and 2025.

Voters approved a total levy collection of up to \$127.4 million. Data provided to the Kitsap Sun by Miller shows the district is on track to collect \$114.5 million through 2025.

The last time South Kitsap voters weighed in on a school funding measure was November 2023 for a 21-year, \$271 million bond, which requires 60% approval. It received just 50.7% support.