

Snoqualmie Valley School District

February 2010 School Levy Propositions Frequently Asked Questions (M&O and Technology Levies)

Updated 11/9/09

What SVSD ballot measures have been proposed for the upcoming election?

The Snoqualmie Valley School Board of Directors has approved two four-year replacement levy propositions – a Maintenance and Operations (M&O) Levy and a Technology Levy – to appear on the February 9, 2010 special election ballot. The levy propositions would replace the current M&O and Technology levies, which will expire after 2010. If approved in February, collection would occur during the calendar years of 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014 for both levies.

Is the February election mail-in only?

Yes. Ballots for the February 9 mail-in only election will be mailed to registered voters in our district on January 22, according to the King County elections office. Within our school district, there is also a drop box near the Fall City Library for ballots. The deadline to register to vote in the February election is January 11, 2010.

How can I register to vote?

If you are new to King County, you can register online at: www.vote.wa.gov. If you need to make an address change to your current King County registration, call the King County Elections Office 206-296-VOTE (206-296-8683) and tell them your new address. For other changes, you must fill out a form (available online) and mail it in. Registration forms must be postmarked 30 days prior to an election. You can also register in person up to 15 days before an election at the King County Elections Office.

MAINTENANCE AND OPERATIONS LEVY:

What would the M&O Levy pay for?

The local Maintenance and Operations Levy, if approved, would replace the current levy which expires in 2010. The four-year replacement levy would provide \$12,310,000 in 2011; \$13,540,000 in 2012; \$15,110,000 in 2013; and \$16,570,000 in 2014. These funds would help bridge gap between what the state provides and that which is needed to provide a basic education for the students in our schools:

- additional teachers to reduce class size
- educational assistants
- course offerings at Mount Si High School (Advanced Placement and 6th period offerings, since the state funds just 5 periods for high school students)
- maintenance and custodial services
- music specialists
- physical education specialists
- library services
- counselors
- student activity programs (such as music, art, drama, debate and athletics)
- transportation costs
- utilities
- textbooks
- material and supplies
- school security
- coaches/advisors
- professional development
- food service staff
- remediation programs
- some staff salaries and benefits

How was the amount determined for the upcoming M&O Levy?

The amount of a Maintenance and Operations Levy is limited by a "levy lid" that the state sets for each school district. This levy lid restricts local school district M&O Levy amounts to a percentage of the state and federal dollars they receive. The state sets different lid limits for different districts, "grandfathering" some districts at much higher rates. For example, the levy lid for the Snoqualmie Valley School District is 24.83%, while Mercer Island has a levy lid of 33.67%. Because Washington State does not fully fund K-12 education and because our district is one of the lowest in per pupil revenues, the proposed levy would authorize collection up to our levy lid. Following a difficult year of state cutbacks and budget reductions, this levy is needed to continue to offer Snoqualmie Valley students programming and educational opportunities commensurate with neighboring districts.

What is the cost of the proposed M&O Levy? Voters authorize a fixed annual amount for collection in school levy elections. Estimated tax rates (per \$1000 of property valuation) are as follows: \$2.00 in 2011, \$2.13 in 2012, \$2.31 in 2013, and \$2.46 in 2014. While tax rates can fluctuate each year, the total amount collected would never exceed the amounts authorized by the voters.

Below are some examples of current and future estimated levy tax bills:

Home Value	2010 Estimated Tax Bill (current M&O)		2011 Estimated Tax Bill (proposed M&O)	
	<i>annual</i>	<i>monthly</i>	<i>annual</i>	<i>monthly</i>
\$300,000	\$498	\$41.50	\$600	\$50.00
\$400,000	\$664	\$55.33	\$800	\$66.67
\$500,000	\$830	\$69.17	\$1,000	\$83.33

What does the *current* M&O Levy cost?

Approved by voters in 2006, the current Maintenance and Operations Levy authorizes \$9,900,000 to be collected in 2010. An estimated tax rate of \$1.66 per \$1,000 will be employed to collect this amount. The current M&O levy expires in 2010.

Why does the district have to ask for local voters' approval for approximately 18% of its operating budget?

Many basic needs, such as textbooks, staffing, transportation and technology, are not fully funded by Washington State (and some programs are not funded at all.) Consequently, Maintenance and Operations Levies have been needed to renew school district operating revenues for more than 30 years in our district and state. In the Snoqualmie Valley School District, about 18% of day-to-day costs are covered by the M&O Levy. In addition, funding in our district falls behind most others in the amount of revenues per pupil received from the state, based on demographic factors defined by the state's funding formula. Our district ranks 289th out of the 295 school districts in revenues per pupil. Now more than ever – following the significant budget reductions our district implemented last spring in response to state cutbacks – renewal of local funding support is needed to help sustain existing education programs for students.

TECHNOLOGY LEVY:

What would the proposed Technology Levy pay for?

The local Technology Levy, if approved, would replace the current levy which expires in 2010. If approved, this four-year replacement levy would provide \$2,475,000 in each of the four years following the election: 2011, 2012, 2013, and 2014. Approximately 57% of the technology funds would be used to refresh or replace existing "outdated" technology, enhance classroom technologies and improve emergency communications/safety systems. 43% of the funds would be used train teachers on how to use technologies in the classroom that engage students in learning and increase their access to resources

commensurate with neighboring districts. This would include:

- replacing older computers and printers
- teacher training
- expanding "green" initiative with thin-client computers
- additional interactive white boards
- student response systems (instant quiz answers and analysis of student understanding)
- mobile computer labs with laptops
- expanding server storage capacity
- access to online resources and web-based software
- expanding technology course offerings
- tech personnel (network support & trainers)
- replacing old phone system with VOIP for cost savings
- improving emergency communications (Enhanced 911)

Why do we need a replacement Technology Levy?

Our state does not include technology in its definition of "basic education." Consequently, ALL technology equipment, service support and training must come from funds approved by local voters. Our district is behind neighboring school districts in terms of our investment in technology. Passage of this levy would help our schools to "catch up" to nearby districts, and help provide our students with the equitable learning opportunities they deserve.

The current technology levy will expire after 2010. Thanks to the district's first technology levy, approved by voters in 2006, the district now has a technology infrastructure that has become an integral part of interactive instructional methods and administrative operations throughout the district. As technology continues to evolve and expectations continue to rise, ongoing support is necessary – for technology equipment, personnel, peripherals and professional development.

How was the Technology Levy determined?

A Technology Advisory committee with 22 community and staff members met several times during the past eight months to evaluate the district's technology needs, study research and best practices, and assess costs. The committee proposed a replacement Technology Levy to address the following key goals:

- Maximize the effectiveness of teachers
- Improve student learning and engagement
- Provide timely access to data and information to assist in decision making and school improvement plans
- Improve communications and technology dependent life/safety systems and programs

Is there a levy lid on Technology Levies?

There is no levy lid on technology levies in our state. Careful consideration was given to identifying a per pupil technology investment that is comparable with neighboring districts.

What is the cost of the proposed Technology Levy? Voters would authorize a fixed annual amount for local collection of \$2,475,000 each year. Estimated tax rates (per \$1000 of property valuation) are as follows: \$0.40 in 2011, \$0.39 in 2012, \$0.38 in 2013, and \$0.37 in 2014. While tax rates can fluctuate each year, the total amount collected would never exceed the amounts authorized by voters.

Below are some examples of current and future estimated Technology Levy tax bills:

Home Value	2010 Estimated Tax Bill (current Tech)		2011 Estimated Tax Bill (proposed Tech)	
	<i>annual</i>	<i>monthly</i>	<i>annual</i>	<i>monthly</i>
\$300,000	\$51	\$4.25	\$120	\$10
\$400,000	\$68	\$5.67	\$160	\$13.33
\$500,000	\$85	\$7.08	\$200	\$16.67

What does the *current* Technology Levy cost?

Approved by voters in 2006, the current Technology Levy authorizes up to \$1,000,000 to be collected each year. In 2010, the estimated tax rate of \$0.17 per \$1,000 will be collected. The current Technology Levy will expire in 2010.

How does our district’s investment in technology compare with neighboring school districts?

The Snoqualmie Valley School District spends less per student on technology than most of our neighboring districts. The following table compares current technology investments (of per pupil spending) by neighboring districts:

Current Technology Expenditures

Select school districts with existing Capital Technology Levies, 2008-09 data:

School District	Annual	Per Student
Bellevue	\$10,200,000	\$620
Mercer Island	\$1,675,000	\$426
Renton	\$5,500,000	\$398
Lake Washington	\$8,375,000	\$352
Tahoma	\$2,483,552	\$339
Issaquah	\$4,275,000	\$264
Northshore	\$4,500,000	\$229
Riverview	\$660,000	\$215
Snoqualmie Valley	\$1,000,000	\$171

How does the proposed Technology Levy compare to other school districts planning to run a Technology Levy in February?

Many of our neighboring districts are in the process of finalizing levy propositions that they also plan to put before their voters in February 2010. The following chart shares information available to date (as of November 1), and compares “per pupil spending” that each district would provide pending voter approval of their replacement levies:

Proposed Amounts for Capital Levies (Technology) after 2010

Select school districts with likely amounts for capital levies in February 2010:

School District	Annual	Per Student
Bellevue	\$13,000,000	\$791
Lake Washington	\$13,000,000	\$546
Issaquah	\$8,231,000	\$508
Mercer Island	\$1,675,000	\$426
Snoqualmie Valley	\$2,475,000	\$422
Renton	\$5,500,000	\$398
Tahoma	\$2,700,000	\$368
Riverview	\$967,581	\$316
Northshore	\$6,000,000	\$305

What would the impact of both replacement levies be on local school taxes?

Here are some examples of the current and future combined costs for M&O and Technology levies in the Snoqualmie Valley School District:

Home Value	*2010 Estimated Tax Bill (current)				**2011 Estimated Tax Bill (future)			
	M&O	Tech	Total annual	Total monthly	M&O	Tech	Total annual	Total monthly
\$300,000	\$498	\$51	\$549	\$45.75	\$600	\$120	\$720	\$60
\$400,000	\$664	\$69	\$732	\$60	\$800	\$160	\$960	\$80
\$500,000	\$830	\$85	\$915	\$76.25	\$1000	\$200	\$1200	\$100

* In 2010, the estimated tax rates for the current levies will be: M&O - \$1.66 per \$1000 assessed property value, and Technology - \$0.17 per \$1000.

** In 2011, the estimated tax rates for the replacement levies would be: M&O - \$2 per \$1000 assessed property value, and Technology - \$0.40 per \$1000.

What happens if the levies do not pass?

If this M&O Levy proposition does not pass, another levy would be re-submitted to the voters. Ultimately, if the M&O Levy does not pass, the District would need to cut 18% of its spending to adjust to the loss of local revenue upon which it currently depends. Just last spring, our District reduced its operating budget by nearly 6% due to state revenue reductions. The loss of another 18% of revenues to operate our schools day to day and compensate staff would require a magnitude of reductions that our district has not yet experienced.

If the Technology Levy does not pass, our district’s investment in technology and training for students and staff would remain behind neighboring districts. Our ability to provide learning opportunities for students commensurate with neighboring schools and appropriate for society’s changing needs would be significantly diminished. Our ability to attract, compensate and retain quality teachers may also be challenged.

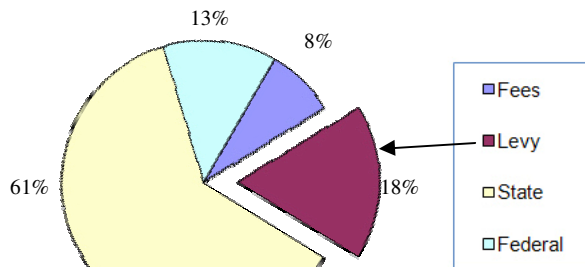
EDUCATION FUNDING:

How are school districts funded?

In Washington State, funding for day-to-day operations of public schools comes from three main sources: state, federal, and local taxpayers. Washington State has not redefined its funding model for public education since 1977 and does not fully fund current educational programs and services. Therefore, nearly all 295 school districts in Washington State must ask their local communities to cover about 20% of these basic needs by approving local levies. These levies support: a variety of programs, instruction, smaller class sizes, technology, transportation, staff training and student safety.

How is the Snoqualmie Valley School District funded?

Revenues that comprise the 2009-10 General operating budget include: 61% from the state, 13% from federal funding, 18% from local levies and about 8% from local fees.



The **state** provides for about 61% of the Snoqualmie Valley School District's General Fund, based on a per pupil revenue formula that considers full-time enrolled students. Unfortunately, due to a variety of funding constraints, the Snoqualmie Valley School District receives significantly less revenues per pupil than other school districts. As mentioned previously, Snoqualmie Valley schools rank 289th out of 295 districts in Washington, according to the most recent data available from the state.

Local Maintenance and Operations (M & O) Levy revenue comprises about 18% of the district's overall operating budget. The levy amount, which requires voter approval every four years, is based on a "levy lid" set by the state. Collection is based on property tax assessments and the tax base in the district.

Local nontax revenues (fees) account for about 8% of the General Fund budget, and include tuition-based preschool, full-day kindergarten, traffic safety, summer school and pay-for-participation fees for extracurricular activities. [Note: School *bonds* provide local revenues as well, but these pay for capital building projects, not day-to-day operating costs paid through the General Fund budget.]

The **federal** government also provides some funding for programs such as special education, vocational education, English Language Learners, Head Start, Title 1, free and reduced lunch programs, and some mathematics and science enrichment. All together, federal contributions add up to about 13% of the district's total revenues.

What's the difference between a bond and a levy?

Bonds provide long-term financing (typically 20 years) for capital projects such as the construction of schools, acquisition of land, and purchase of equipment or modular buildings. Bond funds cannot be utilized to pay for day-to-day operating costs required to run schools. To pass, bonds require a supermajority vote (60% voter approval).

Levies are more short term in nature (typically one to four years) and are intended to cover ongoing day-to-day operations of the district. Because state and federal revenues do not fully fund public education, the district must ask local taxpayers to pass levies every four years to "fill the gap" in funding, in order to provide basic programming for students. Levies require a simple majority (50% voter approval) to pass.

There are three different types of levies:

1. **Maintenance and Operations Levies** provide funding for day-to-day operations and programming for students. M&O levies fund about 18% of the Snoqualmie Valley School District's annual operating budget. M&O levies require renewal from local district voters every four years.
2. **Technology Levies** pay for technology systems, such as: computers, printers, other peripherals, software, information resources, tech support personnel and training to use the technology.
3. **Transportation Levies** provide funding for the purchase of new school buses.

In 2006, I recall a one-year Transportation Levy. Will this be on the ballot again?

The District is not proposing a Transportation Levy at this time (to purchase school buses). Due to the satisfactory condition of our school buses and slowed enrollment growth curtailing the need to expand the fleet at this time, the District anticipates its current fleet will meet the needs of Snoqualmie Valley students for the next few years.

Didn't we just pass a school bond? Why is there another school election so soon?

In March of 2009, Snoqualmie Valley voters approved a 20-year school bond that is providing \$27.5 million for extensive upgrades to existing schools and the addition of 12 new modular classrooms at Mount Si High School to help alleviate crowding. Many of these improvements were completed over the summer, while work continues on the remaining projects through 2010. School bonds provide local support for capital projects concerning facilities and land, and this funding must be kept separate from a district's General Fund for operating costs. Maintenance and Operations Levies, which come before voters every four years, are needed to supplement state funding to the district's General Fund that supports current education programs and day-to-day operations. The district's current M&O and Technology Levies will expire in 2010. The proposed replacement levies would support the next four years from 2011-2014.

Are there other school measures planned for future elections?

Our district must run levy elections every four years to sustain education programs, services and resources in the areas of day-to-day maintenance and operations (M&O), technology and possibly transportation. Looking forward, there will likely be replacement levies on the following years, as current levies expire:

- 2010 levies – M&O/technology
- 2014 levies – M&O/technology/possibly transportation
- 2018 levies – M&O/technology/possibly transportation

There are currently no future bond measures (which fund new buildings, renovations, and/or land) confirmed, as long-term planning around school facilities continues.

What is currently happening regarding future facilities planning for the district?

When Snoqualmie Valley voters approved the March 2009 bond, funding was provided for urgent upgrades to existing school buildings/systems and 12 modular classrooms added to Mount Si High School to alleviate overcrowding. That bond focused on urgent near-term needs since enrollment growth had slowed, providing the district more time to assess capacity needs against future growth projections and economic realities.

A Long-term Facilities Planning committee resumed discussion and research around potential solutions our district's growth, as more students continue to attend our local schools. Projections anticipate an additional 500 students by the year 2015 beyond our current building capacities. Currently, five different options are under consideration for how this increase in enrollment might be served. The committee is in the process of soliciting community feedback on these initial options through four public meetings in October, staff meetings, and detailed descriptions on the district website, plus an online survey – open through November 6. After considering the feedback, the committee plans to narrow the options and present a recommendation to the School Board mid-November. (See website for more information.)