

TO: ALL REGISTERED VOTERS

NOTICE OF ELECTION TO INCREASE TAXES

St Vrain Valley School District No. RE-1J
City and County of Broomfield, and Boulder, Larimer and Weld Counties, Colorado

Election Date: Tuesday, November 2, 2004
Election Hours: 7:00 a.m. to 7:00 p.m.

Local Election Office Address and Telephone Number:

Broomfield County Clerk and Recorder
One DesCombes Drive
Broomfield, Colorado 80020
Telephone: (303) 464-5899

Ballot Title and Text:

BALLOT ISSUE 3A:

SHALL ST. VRAIN VALLEY SCHOOL DISTRICT RE-1J TAXES BE INCREASED \$15,470,000 ANNUALLY, OR BY SUCH LESSER ANNUAL AMOUNTS AS MAY BE AUTHORIZED UNDER THE PUBLIC SCHOOL FINANCE ACT OF 1994 (ACT), AS AMENDED FROM TIME TO TIME, TO CONSTITUTE AN OVERRIDE MILL LEVY, TO BE USED FOR THE PURPOSES:

STUDENT INSTRUCTIONAL AND SAFETY NEEDS,

OPENING AND OPERATING NEW SCHOOLS,

RECRUITING AND RETAINING HIGHLY QUALIFIED EMPLOYEES, AND

ELIMINATION OF THE GENERAL FUND BALANCE DEFICIT,

SUCH TAXES TO BE LEVIED BEGINNING IN 2004 FOR COLLECTION IN 2005 AND CONTINUING EACH TAX YEAR THEREAFTER AND ENDING WITH A LEVY IN 2010 FOR COLLECTION IN 2011; AND

PROVIDED FURTHER THAT A CITIZENS OVERSIGHT COMMITTEE SHALL ANNUALLY REVIEW AND RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF EDUCATION THE USE OF THESE FUNDS FOR THE ABOVE PURPOSES,

SUCH TAXES TO CONSIST OF AN ADDITIONAL AD VALOREM MILL LEVY IMPOSED WITHO UT LIMITATION OF RATE (OR WITH SUCH LIMITATIONS AS MAY BE DETERMINED BY THE BOARD OF EDUCATION) AND IN AMOUNTS SUFFICIENT TO PRODUCE THE ANNUAL INCREASE SET FORTH ABOVE, AND SHALL THE REVENUES RECEIVED FROM SUCH INCREASED MILL LEVY, AND ANY EARNINGS FROM THE INVESTMENT OF SUCH REVENUES, BE RECEIVED, INVESTED, AND SPENT BY THE DISTRICT IN ANY YEAR WITHOUT REGARD TO ANY SPENDING, REVENUE-RAISING, OR OTHER LIMITATION IMPOSED BY, OR CONTAINED IN, ARTICLE X, SECTION 20 OF THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION, SUCH AMOUNTS TO CONSTITUTE A VOTER APPROVED WAIVER OF SUCH LIMITATIONS?

Total District Fiscal Year Spending:

| <u>Fiscal Year</u> | |
|-------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 2004-2005 (estimated) | \$150,560,000 |
| 2003-2004 (actual) | \$137,459,019 |
| 2002-2003 (actual) | \$137,768,662 |
| 2001-2002 (actual) | \$136,531,865 |
| 2000-2001 (actual) | \$121,191,966 |
| Overall percentage change from 2000-2001 to 2004-2005 | 24.2% |
| Overall dollar change from 2000-2001 to 2004-2005 | \$29,368,034 |

District Estimates of Maximum Dollar Amount of Tax Increase and of District Fiscal Year Spending Without the Increase for First Full Fiscal Year of Each Proposed Tax Increase:

| | |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| Estimated Maximum Dollar Amount of Tax Increase for 2004: | \$ 15,470,000 |
| Estimated 2005 Fiscal Year Spending <u>without</u> Proposed Tax Increase: | \$150,560,000 |

The following summaries were prepared from materials filed by persons in favor of or opposed to the ballot issue.

Summary of Written Comments FOR Ballot Issue 3A:

We face a choice in the St. Vrain Valley: Are we going to invest in our children to make our district, state and nation stronger? We must continue the great American tradition of each generation investing in the future of the next.

- As a percentage of income, Colorado ranks 48th in terms of K-12 funding. That means only two states spend a lower percentage of income than we do on elementary and secondary education. (The Bell Policy Center)
- The 81 school districts that have mill levy overrides are able to supplement their per pupil funding. Those that do can compete for staff where shortages exist such as specialized teachers and principals.
- St. Vrain ranks 12th of 13 similarly-sized districts in the state in per pupil funding.

Why should we invest in our students and our communities?

- There is an increasing demand for instructional program options such as all-day kindergarten, summer school, accelerated courses, etc.
- We need to open new schools as scheduled and promised in the 2002 School Bond Program - the students are here and more are coming.
- Class size will be affected if money is not available to open new schools.
- Funding reserves will maintain sound fiscal footing.
- We need to keep our dedicated teachers in our classrooms and attract specialized teachers in an increasingly competitive marketplace.
- CSAP scores went up each of the last two years. Student achievement is now on an upward course – we need to continue this trend.
- Voter surveys indicate support for increased taxes to fund instructional priorities.

A comprehensive new Strategic Plan was developed over the last year on the heels of budget mismanagement concerns and financial recovery. The new School Board adopted it after EXTENSIVE community input over the past year. Our district's progress toward restoring public trust and confidence by collaborative planning and financial accomplishments has been recognized by state leaders who say that St. Vrain Valley is now one of the most financially sound districts in the state. To carry on in this accountable manner, the school board will ask a mill levy override citizens' committee to oversee the mill levy override revenues until the funding expires in seven years.

There is no better reflection of the quality of our communities than the quality of our schools. Great schools contribute to strong home values. And as we all know, generations of citizens in the St. Vrain Valley have taken pride in our commitment to our schools.

A *YES VOTE On 3A* would help all our children to have access to the programs and curriculum they need to continue to rise to higher standards. This investment will benefit *every child in every school* in our district.

Summary of Written Comments AGAINST Ballot Issue 3A:

Good schools are important, and the St. Vrain Valley School District certainly needs to improve:

- More than 300 third graders cannot read or write at grade level (CSAP Proficient or better).
- More than 500 fourth graders cannot read or write at grade level.
- Only 27% of tenth grade students are Proficient or better in Reading, Writing, and Math. The 73% that fail at least one section fail an average of 2.16 of the 3 sections.
- The average (mean) TENTH grade CSAP math score is in the middle of the SEVENTH grade Proficient range.

Given these dismal statistics, one is tempted to throw money at the problem to fix it. Indeed, the generous taxpayers of Colorado and the St. Vrain Valley have done that:

- Amendment 23 guarantees growth in education funding at a rate above inflation.
- The \$212.9 million bond issue passed in 2002 built new schools for growth, and it included over \$50 million to renovate existing buildings, improve athletic fields, and upgrade technology.
- Citizens banded together during the recent financial mismanagement crisis, donating office supplies, cash, and volunteer time.

Most importantly, passing the mill levy override would only reinforce the culture of accountability that produces the results we see today:

- Teachers are paid the same, regardless of results. This makes the profession attractive to bad teachers and repels excellent people from the profession.
- Students are shoved along, though years behind in achievement. This frustrates both students and teachers in subsequent years.
- Administrators are often not held accountable for poor results; some sit in cushy positions for years despite low student achievement.
- Many teachers and administrators receive automatic raises simply based on years of employment, even if their performance declines.

More school funding and prettier buildings do not necessarily mean better results:

- Twin Peaks is the district's lowest elementary and middle school in terms of teacher pay, it is in one of the oldest buildings, and it is consistently among the leaders in CSAP results.
- Ute Creek pays its teachers about HALF of the SVVSD average for high schools, but its overall rating was Average.

We can improve student learning without spending additional money:

- Institute results-based pay to attract and retain excellent teachers and drive the bad ones out.
- Make students accountable for their learning.
- Make administrators accountable for overall results.

Your vote AGAINST this mill levy override is the key to accountability. We should not send the wrong message by throwing good money after bad in a feel-good effort that does not actually fix the system. Furthermore, we should not overburden individual citizens and small businesses with even more taxes; many people are struggling as is, and our local economy cannot afford this kind of hit. Please vote AGAINST the mill levy override.