



Citizens for Pinellas Schools Referendum Guide

Referendum November 8th

APPROVAL OF CONTINUATION OF
ONE-HALF MILL AD VALOREM TAX FOR
SCHOOL DISTRICT OPERATING
EXPENSES

Shall the Pinellas County School District ad valorem millage of one-half mill per year be continued beginning July 1, 2017 and ending four fiscal years later on June 30, 2021, for necessary operating expenses including funds to recruit and retain teachers; preserve reading programs and music and art classes; and provide up-to-date textbooks and technology, with oversight of these expenditures by an independent citizens financial oversight committee?

YES NO

www.CitizensForPinellasSchools.com

WHAT HAPPENS IF IT EXPIRES

What happens if the referendum fails?

The referendum has produced almost \$360 million since approved. Many of the programs instituted have been one-time costs in case funding is not continued, and the district will do its best with the money it has; however, all programs that exceed minimum state requirements will be in jeopardy. Pinellas County could:

- Lose many of our best teachers to school districts paying higher salaries, and have difficulty attracting quality applicants to teach here.
- Cut courses and specialized programs such as art, music, foreign language, advanced placement and drop-out prevention. Cuts could also include magnet programs and fundamental schools.
- Reduce adult education options and vocational training.
- Eliminate or reduce extracurricular activities such as band, athletics, ROTC, student news, and clubs.

If voters approve renewal, what happens when the referendum expires in four years?

The School Board is committed to working with the Governor and Legislature to establish a permanent, reliable funding structure. Failing that, the Board can return to the voters requesting a continuation, or make substantial cuts that will severely impact public education and the quality of life for Pinellas citizens.

*I don't have children in our school system.
Why should I vote for the referendum?*

Good schools support higher property values and are good for our economy because they supply an educated work force and encourage business relocation. An educated population results in lower crime rates and less strain on social programs.

I WANT TO HELP MAKE PINELLAS COUNTY SCHOOLS BETTER !

Enclosed is my check for: \$ _____ \$50 _____ \$100 _____ \$250 _____ \$500 _____ \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

Telephone (home) _____ (Work) _____

Email: _____ Occupation (required) _____

To contribute on-line please visit: www.CitizensForPinellasSchools.com/donate

Please make your checks payable to Citizens for Pinellas Schools. Individual and corporate contributions are welcome in any amount.

Pd.Pol.Adv. paid for by Citizens for Pinellas Schools, PO Box 15525, Clearwater, FL 33766.

HOW THE MONEY HAS BEEN USED

Recruiting and retaining quality teachers

- This school year, teachers will receive a salary stipend of \$3,827 helping us recruit the 400-600 new teachers we need each year and keep the good teachers already in our schools.
- Additional training and materials are continuously made available to our teachers to improve their classroom skills.

Preserve reading programs

- Before the referendum, reading materials were often limited, rarely replaced, and digital text was barely accessible.
- Literacy intervention is being used to help all elementary students read at grade level—in 14 to 18 weeks on average.
- Since renewal, referendum funds have purchased over \$1.28 million in books, e-readers, and laptops.
- All students who are not reading at grade level receive remediation every day.
- Prior to the referendum, all summer school had been eliminated. Now referendum funds help supply materials and training for the Summer Bridge program.
- Additional support and training for college readiness is being offered in 35 middle and high schools.

Preserve music and art classes

- Before the referendum, funding had been slashed for music and art programs.
- The referendum purchases supplies like sheet music, instruments, paint, paper, and easels.
- All high and middle schools have arts computer labs and 24 elementary schools offer digital art.
- Student participation has tripled in our strings and guitar programs.
- Instrument rental fees are waived for students who can't afford them and High Schools have band uniforms.
- Over 1,000 field trips have allowed tens of thousands of students to learn outside the classroom.

Provide up-to-date textbooks and technology

- Before the referendum, district resources went to maintenance rather than new technologies.
- All schools have wireless, mobile computer labs.
- Installed over 2,300 Smart Boards, with a goal of 100% of elementary classrooms by Aug. 2017.
- Libraries are able to offer greater selection through Kindles and e-books. Each school receives \$2,000 for new books per year.
- Programs allow students to study the same curriculum at each student's reading level.

How do I know the money is used as advertised?

The ballot language requires an independent financial oversight committee made up of local citizens. Their meetings are open to the public and their findings are regularly published. The referendum money has always been spent exactly as promised and continues to be closely monitored.

Read their reports and learn more at pcsb.org/referendum

WHY THE MONEY IS NEEDED

Do our schools really need the money?

Per student funding provided by the Legislature is still below 2008 levels. Florida ranks 43rd in the country in per pupil expenditures and is \$2,267 below the national average. Our schools are not receiving the resources they need from the Legislature. The referendum gives Pinellas County a reliable funding source controlled by its citizens.

Why aren't Pinellas school taxes enough?

Florida's Constitution requires the Legislature to "equalize" the distribution of education dollars. Property-rich districts, like Pinellas, help fund property-poor districts that would otherwise never be able to support a school system.

How does Pinellas teacher pay compare to neighboring counties?

The average Pinellas teacher makes less than teachers in Hillsborough, Manatee, and Sarasota - even with the referendum. If the referendum supplement ended our teachers would lose more than \$3,800 a year.

What happened to the lottery dollars?

In the last ten years, total lottery dollars to Pinellas have declined by 70.55%. Discretionary lottery dollars, which allow schools to invest in their highest needs, have gone down 93.33%.

Is this a new tax?

No, it's not. Pinellas voters approved the 1/2 mill in 2004, 2008 and 2012. This is a renewal with the same costs and the money goes to the same programs.

What does a half mill mean?

1/2 mill = \$50 a year per \$100,000 in taxable value.

In the 2016 tax year, the average single family home in Pinellas has a taxable value of \$131,148.

The average homeowner paid \$65.57 a year or less than \$5.50 a month.

Could the State take this money?

No. All the money collected remains here in Pinellas County and by law, the Legislature cannot reduce the amount of money the district normally gets from the state. This referendum produces money above and beyond what the state provides.