

## Tax levy increase aids district's operating budget

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COLUMBIA — On April 3, Columbia residents will vote on two proposals that would help aid the school district's budget and fund future projects.

The Columbia School Board wants to raise funds through a bond issue and tax levy increase. The board voted at its [Jan. 9 meeting](#) to put both items on the April 3 ballot.

Here is some information to help you brush up on the tax levy. For information on the bond issue, [check out our other Q&A.](#)

### **What is a tax levy increase?**

A tax levy increase would come from property taxes in Columbia.

The current tax levy is \$4.08 per \$100 of assessed valuation of real and personal property. The proposed levy increase of 40 cents to \$4.48 would bring about \$8 million more in revenue for the school district.

District spokeswoman Michelle Baumstark said the tax increases would affect commercial and residential property owners within district boundaries, but the taxes would be felt differently because business-owners and homeowners are taxed at different rates.

Linda Quinley, the district's chief financial officer, said homes are taxed based on assessed value, which is 19 percent of the home's actual value. Businesses are also taxed based on assessed value, but the rate is 32 percent of the property's value.

The tax levy increase requires a simple majority of voter approval to pass. Baumstark said that since 1990, the district has asked voters to increase the property tax levy four times. Voters approved three increases, but [rejected the most recent proposal in April 2008.](#)

### **How will the additional revenue be used?**

Funds generated by the tax levy increase would be used to help pay operating costs. [According to Columbia Public Schools](#), this would include sustaining current programs, maintaining and improving class sizes,

meeting students needs and addressing technology needs in the classroom

Quinley said the \$8 million would also help cover declining state funding to the district as well as rising costs.

Superintendent Chris Belcher said \$4 million would help the district keep up with inflationary cuts, \$2 million would be used to re-hire employees and \$2 million would go toward finding ways to fund classroom technology, according to [a previous Missouriian article](#).

### **How will passing the levy increase affect taxes already being paid?**

The bond issue, which includes the debt service levy increase, and tax levy increase are two different ballot items to be approved separately. However, if both pass, it would result in a 52-cent tax increase.

According to the district, this means a person who owns a home with an assessed value of \$150,000 would pay \$148.20 more annually, or \$12.35 monthly.

### **How is a tax levy increase different from the debt service levy increase?**

The tax levy increase is an increase in the property tax rate to generate an additional \$8 million for the district. The debt service levy is the way in which the district would pay back the debt from the bond issue.

### **What's next?**

Quinley said the district has no plans at this time to increase the property tax levy after this year. The bond issue and tax levy will be put up to a public vote April 3.

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