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**REALTORS® endorse levy measure for Kent School District**

BELLEVUE, Washington (January 9, 2020) – Seattle King County REALTORS® voted overwhelmingly to endorse funding requests from three school districts that will be on the February 11 Special Election ballot. An \$83 million levy for the Kent School District was one of the requests that earned support from the Realtor association, which has more than 7,000 members.

The Kent School District proposal is a two-year Renewal Educational Program & Operations Levy. If approved by a majority of the voters, the funding would authorize the district to levy excess taxes as an enrichment levy (in place of an expiring levy) to help pay for:



- Student safety and school security
- Career readiness programs including opportunities for exploration acceleration and remediation in Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math (STEAM)
- Bullying prevention and social-emotional learning programs
- Educational support for students with special needs
- Daily operations to support clean, healthy, and well-maintained schools and classrooms
- Professional development for teachers, paraeducators, principals and educational support staff
- Essential staff such as classroom teachers, nurses, counselors, social workers, and bus drivers not fully funded by the state.

Realtor Dahni Malgarini-Logar, managing broker at RE/MAX Integrity in Kent, said the levy will provide essential funding to support the educational and career-readiness needs of all students district-wide, regardless of their abilities, backgrounds, or family income. “As a Realtor, I understand the connection between quality schools and home values. Approving this levy would be a sound investment for the future of our children and the desirability of the communities served by the district. Top-performing schools are a priority for parents, but they also benefit both buyers and sellers of real estate,” she stated.

At a meeting with members of SKCR’s Governmental & Public Affairs Committee, citizen activist Leslie Hamada, newly-elected president of the Kent School Board, explained the financing request, the importance of closing the funding gap between state funding and district needs, and the impact on taxpayers. She noted the proposed levy rate would allow the district to keep the overall tax rate constant, including the EP&O levy renewal for two years, the bond debt service, and the voter-approved 2018 Technology and Capital Levy.

Prior to acting on the endorsement requests, SKCR committee members reviewed responses to a detailed, five-part questionnaire, which covered basic information about the proposal, the involvement of citizens in the process, the impact on property owners, and the campaign plan.

If approved, Kent’s levy would generate \$83,150,000 based on the renewal levy rate of \$2.15 per \$1,000 in assessed home valuation. When combined with existing obligations for bond debt service and the 2018 Technology and Capital Levy, the annual average rate total would be \$3.83 per \$1,000/AV. The owner of a home valued at \$600,000 would pay \$1,290 per year in 2021 and 2022, according to the district.

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Sam Pace, a Realtor who lives in the Kent School District, said a 2017 [study by the National Association of Realtors](#)® (NAR) found 26% of home buyers considered the quality of schools when looking for a new home. Schools aren't the only determinant of home prices – safety, commute times, jobs, and housing inventory all play a part in any market. But a good home in a good school district can fetch a higher price, and also hold a better resale value than a similar home in a less-stellar district. In fact, said Pace, “Economists have estimated that within suburban neighborhoods, a 5% improvement in test scores can raise home prices by 2.5%,” according to the NY Times.

Numerous other studies also indicate quality schools have a direct and positive influence on residential property values, added David Crowell, JD, director of governmental and public affairs at SKCR.

Crowell cited a 2013 realtor.com survey that found over 90% of home buyers said school boundaries are “important” or “somewhat important,” and that many are willing to go over budget if it means they will locate in a desirable school district. Other research suggests homes in good school districts hold their value better in economic downturns, he added.

Realtors have been actively engaged in education policy and school financing issues in several of the 20 K-12 districts within King County for many years, according to Crowell. “Along with our endorsements, Realtors are committed to helping [Citizens for Kent Schools](#) (CFKS, a nonprofit, volunteer organization) get out the vote and to assist other campaign proponents in their informational outreach activities,” Crowell added.

In addition to endorsing the Kent School District proposal, the Government Affairs Committee also voted to support funding requests from the Bellevue School District and the Tahoma School District.

SKCR, based in Bellevue, has more than 7,000 members and is a local board of the National Association of REALTORS® (NAR). Members of the nonprofit professional trade association adhere to a strict Code of Ethics and participate in matters at all levels of government that affect private property rights, housing supplies, affordability, and homeownership opportunities. Membership is voluntary, and only members may use the term REALTOR®, which is a registered collective membership mark.

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