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FOR INFORMATION: .. David Crowell, JD, Director of Governmental & Public Affairs, 425-974-1013

REALTORS® endorse two levies for Tahoma 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. Among them was the Tahoma School District. Its \$75 million Educational Programs and Operations Levy and \$16.8 million Technology Levy both earned support from the Realtor association, which has more than 7,000 members.

If approved by a majority of the voters, the 2020 Educational Programs and Operations Levy would renew an expiring levy and would close the gap between state and federal dollars provided and the true cost of operating the school district. It would supplement or fully fund a wide array of needs from salary and benefits for teachers and staff, to individual and small group instruction for students who are working below grade level, to sports, extracurricular activities and field trips.



District resident Tanya Neilsen, a broker with the Tamara Paul Group at RE/MAX Choice Executives in Covington, said buyers know good schools define communities. “It’s not just families with school-age kids that are concerned about the quality of schools when buying a home. Savvy buyers know that quality schools will be a factor in the sales price when it’s time to sell,” she stated, citing the *Schools & Housing 2016 Report Card* published by the parent company of RealtyTrac.

At a meeting with members of SKCR’s Governmental & Public Affairs Committee, Lori Cloud, the district’s assistant superintendent and director of financial services, and community/schools volunteer Grifan Cayce, an attorney at Cayce Grove in Maple Valley, explained the financing request, the opportunities the measures would fund, and the role of the Voice of Tahoma Education (VOTE) Committee, an independent organization of campaign supporters.

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. The questionnaire also covered the district’s history of ballot measures and recent record of academic achievements and challenges.

If approved, Tahoma’s Educational Programs levy would generate just over \$75 million over four years (2021-2024). It would cost property owners \$2 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation, an increase of 50 cents per \$1,000 of assessed valuation over the expiring levy. According to district data, the owner of a home valued at \$500,000 would pay approximately \$1,000 yearly for this measure.

The Technology Levy, if authorized, would reinstate funding that ended when a renewal levy was turned down by voters in 2018. In addition to helping the district to catch up with equipment replacement, maintenance and training, it enables implementation of the district's 2019-2023 Technology Plan which includes providing support for teachers as they further integrate technology into curriculum.

The Technology Levy would yield \$16.8 million over four years, based on a staggered rate ranging from \$0.40 to \$0.49 per \$1,000 assessed value. The owner of a home valued at \$500,000 would pay an estimated \$235 the first year and \$200 the final year.

Together, the two levies if approved would cost the owner of a home valued at \$500,000 about \$40 more per month than the current assessment.

Realtor Shane Davies, owner of Windermere Real Estate in Maple Valley, said they had planned to enroll their children in private schools, but decided against it. "My kids had the most amazing education with the Tahoma district," he exclaimed, adding he is especially impressed it has retained the "We the People" civic education program. He also praised the district for its commitment to "Future Ready Students."

Davies, the 2018 president of Seattle King County Realtors, also commented on the connection between quality schools and home values. "The Tahoma District is recognized for its innovations in developing and using curriculum, and its test scores place it among the state's top 5 percent. I know from my years as a Realtor and from industry research that parents will pay a premium to be situated in high-performing school districts like ours."

Numerous studies indicate quality schools have a direct and positive influence on residential property values, stated 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. He also referenced a report in the *New York Times* wherein economists claimed a 5% improvement in test scores can raise suburban home prices by 2.5%. Other research suggests homes in good school districts hold their value better in economic downturns.

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 educate voters about the importance of these [levies](#) and helping VOTE (the citizens committee) get out the out the 'yes' vote," Crowell said.

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