



# Election Update

## Tax Levy: Questions & Answers

*The Columbia Public Schools Board of Education has called a special election on Tuesday, April 8, to submit a property tax levy increase proposal to Columbia voters. The proposal requires majority approval. Information concerning the issue follows:*

REGISTER TO VOTE BY  
MARCH 12

**Q. What is the amount of the proposed property tax levy increase?**

A. 54 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation

**Q. Why does the district need a tax levy increase?**

A. The tax levy increase will help the district continue to do what is right for Columbia's children. A tax levy increase is necessary due to a change in state funding, increases in the cost of employing teachers and staff, increased mandatory retirement benefits, increases in fixed costs such as utilities and transportation and an increase in student population over the last five years.

**Q. Is the district going to make any budget cuts to help its financial situation?**

A. Yes, in order to keep the levy increase at a reasonable rate, the district will also need to cut its operating budget by \$5 million or approximately three percent. The tax levy increase and the budget cuts will allow the district to stop spending its reserves and maintain a balanced budget for a projected five years.

**Q. Why not use more of the school district's reserves to cover the budget shortfall?**

A. Simply, the reserve fund is a savings account. In Columbia Public Schools, those funds are meant to be used to cover payroll and district expenses when revenue funds are not available as well as to cover unpredictable emergency expenses. For example, the district uses reserves to help meet cash flow needs from month to month due to the timing of when local, state and federal funding revenues arrive.

**Q. What is the amount of district reserves?**

A. In 2006-07, the district reserves were 24.59 percent or \$36.81 million. In 2007-08, the district is budgeted to spend \$10.3 million to cover increased costs and account for changes in state funding — taking the reserve amount down to 16.13 percent or \$26.4 million. This percent of reserves will leave the district with less than two months' worth of expenses in its reserve fund. It takes roughly \$14 million to pay one month's worth of bills. Columbia's reserve amounts are in line with what other comparison districts keep in their reserve funds. In fact, in 2007-08 Columbia's reserve funds will be less than 11 of the 12 districts in Columbia's comparison group.

**Q. Did the Board of Education know it would need a tax levy increase when it voted to spend reserve funds?**

A. Yes, discussions regarding the district's budget began nearly a year ago. In all cases, the board expressed concern about using funds from the district's reserves as they would only be one-time funds. However, the board felt it was important to spend excess reserves for the 2007-08 school year to continue meeting student needs prior to requesting a tax levy increase.

**Q. Did the community just vote for a tax increase?**

A. No, the community voted last April for a \$60 million no-tax-increase bond issue to fund the construction of a new elementary school, phase one of a new high school, air condition five schools, fund technology and conduct necessary building maintenance and improvements. By law, bond funds cannot be used to pay regular operating expenses such as salaries and benefits, educational supplies and materials, general maintenance and upkeep of facilities and utility and transportation costs.

**Q. If the proposed 54-cent tax levy increase is passed, how much will it cost a homeowner?**

A. The additional cost is estimated to be:

Value of Home	Annual Cost	Monthly Cost
\$75,000	\$76.95	\$6.41
100,000	102.60	8.55
150,000	153.90	12.83
200,000	205.20	17.10
250,000	256.50	21.38

**Q. When is the election?**

A. Tuesday, April 8, 2008

**Q. When is the last day to register to vote?**

A. The last day to register to vote is March 12, 2008. You may register at the Roger Wilson Boone County Government Center, 801 East Walnut. The voter registration office is open Monday-Friday 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. You may also register at the ASUM Office in the basement of Brady Commons, University of Missouri - Columbia campus. Additionally, postcard registration forms are available throughout Boone County, on the Boone County Government Web site at [www.showmeboone.com/clerk](http://www.showmeboone.com/clerk) or by calling 886-4375.

**Q. How can you vote absentee for this election?**

A. Registered voters may cast absentee ballots February 26 through Monday, April 7, at the Roger Wilson Boone County Government Center, 801 East Walnut. Absentee ballots by mail must be requested by Wednesday, April 2. The voter registration office is open Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. and will be open Saturday, April 5, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. for absentee voting. If you have questions please contact the county elections office at 886-4375.

**Did you know....**

- It takes roughly \$14 million to pay one month's bills in Columbia Public Schools. These bills include salaries, benefits and utilities.
- This school year, the district will have less than two months' worth of bills in its savings account.
- 82 percent of the district's budget is salaries and benefits for employees.
- The district is the third largest employer in Columbia.
- Student enrollment in the district has increased by more than 700 students over the last five years.
- Since 1990, the district has only requested and received three tax levy increases.
- The district expects to only receive \$3 million in additional money from the state over the next five years.



Please access the district Web site at [www.columbia.k12.mo.us](http://www.columbia.k12.mo.us) for more information. Or contact the district administrative offices at (573) 214-3400.