



PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Strong Schools = Strong Communities

South St Paul Schools Puts Two School Funding Requests on November 7 Ballot

After years of cutting budgets, a history of inadequate state funding for our schools and months of analyzing district finances, the South St Paul School Board voted unanimously to put two school funding requests before residents on a November 7, 2017 ballot:

- Question 1 would increase the district's operating levy to help the district retain quality teaching staff, fund programs to help students who struggle academically, operate the schools and minimize future budget cuts.
- Question 2 would renew the district's technology levy to help fund technology for teaching and learning by keeping computers up-to-date, giving students' exposure and access to technology tools and providing teachers with technology training.

"The bottom line is we need additional funding to provide the learning environment our students need to succeed," said Chris Walker, School Board Chair. "These requests won't solve all our financial challenges, but we are very sensitive to our community's ability to increase their taxes. Our residents know that strong schools make strong communities, and we only ask for their investment when all other avenues have been explored."

Quick funding facts:

- If state funding had kept up with inflation since 2003, South St Paul Public Schools (SSPPS) would have received an additional \$5 million last year to spend on students' educational needs.
- SSPPS currently receives \$470 less in per-student voter-approved funding than the average of all Dakota County school districts; our local education funding is among the lowest in the county.
- SSPPS has cut nearly \$6 million in less than ten years, and recently approved cutting \$1 million more for 2017-18.
- In the past ten years, SSPPS has cut teachers, support staff, administrative staff, kindergarten assistants, custodians, school supplies, curriculum and other areas. The district has also increased activities fees to help balance costs.
- The last time SSPPS voters approved an operating levy increase was 2009.
- If voters approve the operating levy increase, SSPPS will receive \$354 more per student, increasing annual revenue by \$1.3 million. While that additional revenue won't cover the entire 2018-19 projected budget deficit of \$1.7 million, it will help the district protect critical educational programs and staff and minimize future cuts.

If question 1 is approved, the tax impact on an average district homeowner (\$178,000 value home) would be less than \$12 per month. If question 2 is approved, there would be no tax increase because it renews an existing levy.

A referendum website and informational materials are being developed which will include more detailed information; visit www.sspps.org for ongoing information.

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