



No-tax-increase bond proposal

On Nov. 3, 2009, Springfield Public Schools will ask voters to approve a no-tax-increase bond issue that will leverage federal stimulus money to fund air conditioning, construction & improvements and technology.

1. Why is Springfield Public Schools requesting a \$50 million bond issue now?

Springfield Public Schools has the unique opportunity to maximize its resources without increasing taxes. Interest-free bonds are available through the federal stimulus program to help fund facility improvements. The district needs to pass a bond issue before April 2010 to take advantage of this federal funding source. By participating, the district can save taxpayers millions of dollars in interest by leveraging federal funding to complete critical facility improvements.

2. Why is this referred to as a no-tax-increase bond issue?

Approving a new bond issue will not increase the current tax rate for Springfield residents. The current debt-service levy is 51 cents and that will not change if this bond issue is approved.

3. If the bond is not approved will my tax rate decrease?

No. The current 51-cent levy will be in effect until 2026 even if voters do not approve the Nov. 3 bond. If it is approved, your tax rate will not increase. You will continue to pay the same 51-cent levy until 2030.

4. Why is air-conditioning schools a priority?

The Springfield community has been clear about its desire to air condition all schools. With approval of this bond issue, SPS will satisfy its pledge to do just that. Air conditioning the remaining eight schools with this bond will complete the effort initiated a decade ago to achieve equity in the quality of learning environment available to students in every part of our community. Having all schools air conditioned will allow SPS greater flexibility in scheduling the first day of school and in conducting summer school and other year-round programs.

5. What schools will benefit from improvements?

Air conditioning, Construction & Improvements and **Technology** are the focus of projects to be funded by the \$50 million bond issue.

- a. Air conditioning will be installed in 9 buildings:
 - **Boyd, Robberson, Rountree, Sunshine** and **York** elementary schools
 - **Jarrett** and **Reed** middle schools
 - **Phelps Center for the Gifted**
 - **Tefft Center**
- b. Construction and improvements will affect six schools:
 - **Hillcrest High School:** electrical upgrade; auditorium remodel; restroom remodel; improvements to technology infrastructure; elevator installation in gymnasium; enclosed walkway between gymnasium and main building; kitchen improvements; roof, ceiling, floor tile and hot water pipe repairs and replacements; and stadium lighting.
 - **Westport Elementary School:** A kindergarten through 8th grade campus will be developed at the current Westport site to combine Study Middle School and Westport. Improvements would include renovation of the existing all-purpose room and addition of a new cafeteria, gymnasium and classrooms. This will allow alternative programs to move to the Study building, saving more than \$3 million, which is the cost to air condition and maintain Bailey, Berry and Pepperdine buildings where the programs are currently housed, and it will create room to serve more at-risk students.
 - **Hickory Hills School:** Construction of a new school, scheduled to be complete in December 2009, is currently being funded via lease participation certificates. A portion of this bond will provide the principal necessary to retire those lease participation certificates, saving interest and freeing up operating revenue.
 - **Jeffries Elementary School:** A gymnasium with a high-school sized court will be constructed. The 10,000- to 11,000-square-foot addition will include new restrooms and a corridor to connect the gym to the school building.
 - **Glendale High School:** electrical and technology infrastructure upgrades, installation of new stadium bleachers and new stadium lighting.
 - **Kickapoo High School:** installation of new stadium lighting.
- c. Technology will be purchased and installed to ensure every classroom in the district is equipped with an LCD projector and interactive whiteboard. Aging computers will be replaced as needed with N-computing units, a computer processing unit which can operate multiple student workstations.

For more information, visit www.springfieldpublicschools.org

6. What is the Qualified School Construction Bond program?

Federal stimulus funds for facility improvements are being made available to public school districts through interest-free bonds via the [Qualified School Construction Bond](#) program.

Missouri will be awarded \$282 million over two years to allocate to school districts that pass general obligation bond measures in 2009 or 2010. Each school district may then apply to receive a portion of the interest-free bonds available through the state. To qualify, SPS needs to approve a bond measure by April 2010. If Springfield Public Schools does not participate in this program by passing a bond, the federal stimulus money will go to other Missouri school districts.

The district's investment advisor has stated that a conservative estimate would be that SPS could likely qualify for \$5 million to \$7 million in interest-free bonds through QSCB.

7. What will happen if SPS does not receive the estimated amount in interest-free bonds?

Until voters approve the bond issue and the district applies to the state for interest-free bonds, it will not know exactly how much funding SPS will receive. If the district is eligible for less, the school board has identified the Hickory Hills lease participation certificate project to offset the difference. Instead of allocating \$9 million to retire the lease participation certificates, a lesser amount would go toward this project.

8. Why will money from the proposed bond be used to retire lease participation certificates for the construction of Hickory Hills School?

Paying off the lease participation certificates early will save interest costs and free up district operating revenue. When the school board authorized the lease participation certificates in February 2009 to fund construction of a new Hickory Hills School, it structured the agreement so that it could be paid off early. If voters approve the bond initiative, \$9 million in bond proceeds would be placed into an interest-earning escrow account and used to offset the LPC payments until the call option date is reached at which time the escrow funds would be used to pay off the remaining LPC principal.

9. What is Springfield Public Schools current tax levy?

Springfield Public Schools has one the lowest tax levies in Missouri. Currently the district's total levy is \$3.6223. Included in that is the 51 cent debt-service levy. Of the 22 Missouri

school districts with enrollments greater than 8,000 students, SPS, with an enrollment of about 24,000, has the third lowest levy in the state.

10. How will the question read on the Nov. 3, 2009, ballot?

“Shall the School District of Springfield R-12, Springfield, Missouri, issue its general obligation bonds in the amount of \$50,000,000, a portion of which would include qualified school construction bonds to be issued under the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (Stimulus Act), for the purpose of (1) air conditioning school buildings, (2) making improvements to Hillcrest High School and other school facilities, to include acquiring, improving, repairing and renovating existing buildings, (3) acquiring title to school facilities by paying off lease obligations, and (4) furnishing and equipping school buildings?”

If this question is approved, the District’s debt service tax levy is projected to remain unchanged at the current levy of \$0.51 per one hundred dollars of assessed valuation.”

11. How do I register to vote in the Nov. 3 election?

If you are not currently registered to vote, you must do so by Oct. 7. Any school secretary can provide the necessary form or you may access it online at the following link: http://www.greenecountymo.org/election/file/voter_registration_application.pdf. If you have questions, contact the Greene County Clerk’s office at 868-4055.

12. Didn’t the district finish air conditioning all schools with the 2006 bond?

With the 2006 bond, 18 schools were identified to receive air conditioning. Those are all complete. In addition, the district was able to air condition three additional schools due to careful management of construction costs and wise investment of bond money. Because of the large number of schools that needed air conditioning, SPS created a plan to complete the work over a period of time with passage of three separate bond issues. The first was passed in 2003 and the second was approved in 2006. The 2009 bond will fund air conditioning of the eight remaining schools.

13. What is a bond issue?

A bond issue is a mechanism a school district uses to generate revenue to fund capital projects. Money from a bond issue can only be used to pay for capital projects such as building new schools or renovating existing buildings. To issue general obligation bonds, a school district must obtain voter approval.

14. What is the difference between a bond issue and a tax levy?

A school district requests a bond issue when it needs to make capital improvements such as building or renovating schools. A tax levy funds operating expenses like salaries, utilities and textbooks. State law is very specific that money from a bond issue may only be used for capital improvements and not to fund a district's operating budget.