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Parcel Tax Elections on the Rise

Over the past three years, all California school districts have suffered revenue losses. Most have few options except to wait for the state to recover economically and hope for higher funding in the future. Passage of a parcel tax is one of the few things a local school district can do to help dig itself out of the hole the state has put us in.

But parcel taxes are difficult to pass even in the best of times and even harder during tough times. Unlike Proposition 39 facility bond measures, which require a 55% voter approval, parcel taxes still require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. Getting a two-thirds vote during a time of high unemployment and economic distress is a monumental undertaking. Historically, new parcel taxes, as opposed to renewal of existing parcel taxes, have a dismal pass rate—well below 50%.

Nonetheless, 13 school districts have decided to give the community a chance to help their schools in this time of great need. It is interesting that all 13 school districts have chosen vote-by-mail campaigns with an election date of May 3, 2011. The periods range from two years to eight years, and the amounts from \$49 to \$200 per parcel per year.

Unlike bond funds, the dollars generated by a parcel tax may be put to a wide variety of operational uses. All 13 of these proposed parcel taxes stress maintaining the quality of education in the community, protection of educational programs, and providing a supplemental source of funding that is more stable than that offered by the state.

We commend these districts and their community leaders for reaching for local solutions. And we wish all of them the best of luck on May 3. [Click here](#) to see elections on May 3, 2011 ballot.

—Carmen Thompson and Ron Bennett

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