

Give West tax questionnaire proper attention

The issue: West Aurora School District is sending a letter and creating an online questionnaire this week asking residents about a proposed tax-rate increase.

We say: Give this survey your attention and make a response. Your tax dollars and your children's education depend on it.

If you live in the West Aurora School District, you likely will receive in the next few weeks a letter asking your thoughts about a possible 45- to 50-cent tax-rate increase to fund operations at West schools. The letter will request that you go online to fill out a confidential survey on education and tax rates.

If you're as busy as most people are these days, you might be inclined to dismiss the letter or drop it in the "round file" of your wastebasket.

Please don't. This is important information that will help you make a smart vote if the referendum appears on the ballot, most likely in November or April.

One piece of information that's worth noting is the operational tax rate, not only of West Aurora but of the East Aurora School District as compared to other districts in Kane and DuPage counties.

West's operational tax rate is less than \$3.03 per \$100 assessed value. East's is even less — at \$2.92. These rates are significantly lower than neighboring districts.

Oswego School District is at about \$4.08, St. Charles at \$4.16, Geneva at \$4.17, Batavia at \$4.18, Naperville at \$4.27 and Kaneland at \$4.51.

What these numbers reveal is the West and East districts have been very prudent with your tax dollars, that both administrations have worked hard to play fair and that it is reasonable for either or both districts to put a tax-increase question on the ballot.

West hasn't had a voter-approved increase in the operational rate since 1988.

During that time, voters in Kaneland have approved operational rate increases four times. Voters in Batavia, Geneva, Indian Prairie and Oswego have said "yes" twice to operation-fund increases.

Another important aspect of the West proposal is a teaching-and-learning initiative being proposed by Superintendent Jim Rydland. The survey will ask if you are willing to pay an additional 5-cent tax increase to fund the initiative, which focuses curriculum on student needs.

This is an interesting tack, and again worthy of discussion.

When voters go to the polls, they often OK the bricks and mortar but say "no" to the tax-rate increase for the operations necessary for those schools. Voters aren't dummies. They understand that you pay off the debt for a building over time — but a tax-rate increase is forever.

That's why you need to get as much solid information as possible to weigh West's proposal.

Now is the time to investigate these issues, not on the eve of election day.

Read the letter. Complete the survey online or call (630) 301-5033 for a hard copy.

Do this so you can make an informed decision on this referendum — whether you're for it, or agin' it.

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