

**Blaine School District
Maintenance and Operations Levy
Frequently Asked Questions
February 14, 2012 Election Date**

Q: Is the Blaine School District going to run another levy request?

A: Yes. The Blaine School District Board of Directors is placing a four-year replacement Maintenance and Operations Levy before voters on the February 14, 2012 ballot.

Q: What exactly is the Levy?

A: A Levy is a property tax on real estate that helps finance educational programs and operations of the public schools. The levy specifies an amount to be collected each year. This is a renewal of the Replacement Levy approved in February 2008. If approved, voters would be *replacing* the current four-year Levy expiring at the end of the 2012 calendar year.

Q: What percentage of the district's budget does the Levy represent?

A: During the 2011-12 budget year, the Maintenance and Operations Levy will account for 25% of district expenditures.

Q: Why does the Blaine School District need Levy funds every year?

A: Public school districts in Washington State receive the majority of their annual operating funds from the state. However, the legislature only funds approximately 62% of what it costs to provide a child's public education, and this number has been declining annually as a result of rapidly declining State revenues. The balance of the money necessary to operate the Blaine School District is expected to come from the federal government, grants, and local levies.

Q: What district programs and operations are supported by this Levy?

A: School District programs such as athletics, music, drama, student activities get funding from the Levy. The Blaine School District Levy provides critical funding for these important programs that could not otherwise be offered without it. Part of the cost of busing to and from school comes from the Levy. Almost all of the regular maintenance that must be done to keep buildings repaired, most of the cost for teacher training, and also a percentage of the cost of providing special education services comes from the Levy.

Q: How much revenue will the Maintenance and Operations Levy generate.

The Levy amounts being requested are:

\$6,100,000 for 2013

\$6,240,000 for 2014

\$6,360,000 for 2015

\$6,500,000 for 2016

Q: Will approval of this request result in a higher tax rate this time?

A: Yes. Rates are impacted by assessed valuation of property and as such are subject to variation as property values increase or decline. In addition, the proposed levels of collection are higher, as the State has raised the "Levy Lid" in an effort to provide school districts with the opportunity to offset significant declines in overall State revenue, as we strive to maintain current program offerings. The estimated tax rates for the new Levy are:

\$1.62 for 2013

\$1.64 for 2014

\$1.66 for 2015

\$1.68 for 2016

Q: Does an increase in property values mean schools get more money?

A: No. Once the Levy amount has been approved by the voters, the district cannot collect a total levy amount higher than that which has been authorized, regardless of changes in property values. Any increase or decrease in property value may impact the tax rate, but will not impact the amount of total revenue approved by the voters.

Q: Why is the Levy rate in Blaine typically lower than that of other districts in Whatcom County?

A: The BP Cherry Point Refinery historically represents up to a 24% portion of the tax base in the Blaine School District, and therefore pays a significant share of the Maintenance and Operations Levy total. The resulting impact to home owners is significantly less than what many of our neighboring districts would have to levy to raise a similar level of tax revenue.

2011 Levy Tax Rates (Rate Per \$1000 Assessed Valuation)

	Levy Rate 2011 (Projected)
Nooksack Valley	3.40
Ferndale	3.16
Mt. Baker	2.84
Meridian	2.80
Lynden	2.48
Bellingham	2.30
Blaine	1.39

Q: What are the election requirements?

A: Washington State law has two requirements for school Levy elections:

(1) Replacement Levy measures require a simple majority vote; that means that at least 50% of the votes must be “YES” in order for the measure to pass.

(2) At least 40% of the voters who voted in the last general election must cast a ballot for the February 14, 2012 Levy to be validated.

Q: Where do I vote?

A: A ballot for the Blaine School District February 14, 2012 Levy election will be mailed to the homes of registered voters on or around January 26, 2012.

Q: What if the levy doesn't pass?

A: A Levy failure will mean elimination or reduction of significant Levy-supported programs and activities that enrich and support the lives and education of our children, and could critically impact our families and community. Cutting the budget to fund only the bare minimum would require the reduction of our quality teaching staff and important support services, plus much more.

Q: Can't the money to do these things be found somewhere else?

A: The Levy *is* the “somewhere else.” Schools are limited by law as to where they can raise the money—the Levy is the primary place allowed.

Q: Can we use Bond money to meet levy-funded needs?

A: No. Bond money and Levy money are for two completely different purposes. Bond money must be used to build or replace school buildings and major equipment. Maintenance and Operations Levies help pay for the annual cost of running our schools. The school district can not use bond funds for normal operations. Washington school districts depend on Maintenance and Operation Levies for operating revenue.

Q: Am I tax exempt?

A: An exemption may be available for qualifying seniors and low-income homeowners. You are encouraged to contact the county auditor's office for information specific to property tax exemptions.

Levy questions, comments and suggestions may be sent via email to: levy@blainesd.org or by U.S. Mail to: Superintendent, Blaine School District, 765 H. Street, Blaine, WA 98230.

10/27/2011