

School officials are misleading voters about the real cost of proposed school construction bonds

By LIV FINNE | Oct 4, 2023

BLOG



At next month's election, administrators at seven school districts are asking local voters to pass more school bond debt.

In 2020 a number of school districts made a similar request, but administrators hid the true cost of what they were proposing. These research findings are reported in our Policy Note, [here](#).

It appears to be happening again. Six of the seven school construction proposals on the November ballot are misleading the public by suggesting tax rates will stay fixed, and will not change in the future. For example, page 117 of [the current Pierce County Voters Pamphlet](#) says the cost of the school construction bond for Fife Schools will be \$0.67 per thousand of assessed value, \$201 a year for a \$300,000 home, or about \$4,000 over 20 years.

The actual full and true cost of the Fife school bond measure, if approved by voters, will be nearly four times higher, about \$15,538 over 20 years. See [Calculator | The School Data Project](#) and [BondNo - Fife SD](#).

The online School Data calculator shows the full cost of the proposed school construction bonds, at https://schooldatapoint.com/report_levies_20231107.

Here is the full, true and accurate cost of the school construction bonds which administrators have failed to disclose to the public:

Fife School District. Taxpayers who own property valued at \$300,000 will pay a total of \$15,538 in principal and interest over 20 years if voters approve the \$205 million school bond measure.

Fife taxpayers will repay the \$205 million principal amount, plus an additional \$125 million in interest.

Enumclaw School District. Taxpayers who own property valued at \$600,000 will pay \$12,376 in principal and interest over 15 years if voters approve the \$103 million school bond measure.

Enumclaw taxpayers will repay the \$103 million principal amount, plus an additional \$51 million in interest.

Hood Canal School District. Taxpayers who own property valued at \$350,000 in 2023 will pay \$9,971 in principal and interest over 20 years if voters approve the \$34 million school bond measure.

Hood Canal taxpayers will repay the \$34 million principal amount, plus an additional \$21 million in interest.

Napavine School District. Taxpayers who own property valued at \$400,000 will pay \$19,065 in principal and interest over 26 years if voters approve the \$19 million school bond measure.

Napavine taxpayers will repay the \$19 million principal amount, plus an additional \$19 million in interest.

South Kitsap School District. Taxpayers who own property valued at \$600,000 will pay \$19,654 in principal and interest over 22 years if voters approve the \$271 million school bond measure.

South Kitsap taxpayers will repay the \$271 million principal amount, plus an additional \$188 million in interest.

South Whidbey School District. Taxpayers who own property valued at \$625,000 will pay \$12,102 in principal and interest over 20 years if voters approve the \$79.8 million school bond measure.

South Whidbey taxpayers will repay the \$79.8 million principal amount, plus an additional \$58.8 million in interest.

More details are available at [BondNo.](#), and at [Reports | The School Data Project](#).

The only district honestly describing the true, full cost of bond approval to the public is the Union Gap School District in the Yakima Valley.

School bond measures approved by voters require homeowners and renters to pay higher property taxes and higher rents for many years. The result is higher housing costs for everyone, especially for the homeless, working and low-income families and elderly people living on fixed incomes. The higher taxes proposed by school officials falls hardest on those least able to pay.

The current and next generation will be paying for these school construction bonds for decades.

School officials should be required to provide the public with true and complete information about the real cost of approving school bonds. By doing so, state policymakers can help restore the public's trust and confidence in the process of approving school bonds.

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