Executive Summary: Tentative 2026 Tax Levy

This document presents the tentative 2026 tax levy for review. This levy, or "asking," is the formal request to the county clerks of Ogle and Winnebago counties to collect property taxes on behalf of Meridian Community Unit School District 223. The funds levied are essential for all district operations, including education, operations & maintenance, transportation, and other restricted funds.

Key Financials & The "Ask"
The proposed 2026 total levy extension (the total amount to be collected) is $16,957,837. This represents a $1,120,887.03 increase (+7.08%) over the 2025 actual net extension of $15,836,949.97

- 2025 Actual Extension: $15,836,949.97
- 2026 Proposed Extension: $16,957,837
- Total Dollar Increase: +$1,120,887.03 (includes bonds)

Truth in Taxation Compliance
The total proposed operating extension increase is 7.08% (107.08% of the previous year's extension). Because this figure exceeds the 5.0% statutory threshold established under the Illinois Truth in Taxation Act (35 ILCS 200/18-55), the district is required to publish the statutory black-border public notice in a local newspaper and conduct a public Truth in Taxation Hearing prior to final adoption.

Key Driver: EAV Growth & Taxpayer Impact
The levy is structured to capture essential local revenue generated by strong Equalized Assessed Valuation (EAV) growth across both Ogle and Winnebago counties, including over $2.15 million in new construction:

- Ogle County Rate-Setting EAV: $292, 475, 653 ($2,145,652 in new construction)
- Winnebago County Rate-Setting EAV: $21, 311, 249 ($12,066 in new construction)
- 2025 Actual District EAV: $287,285,553
- 2026 Estimated District Rate-Setting EAV: $313,786,902 (per combined preliminary county abstracts), representing a projected increase of 9.2% (+$26,501,349)

Because the district's tax base (EAV) is expanding in tandem with operational asking, the district can capture needed operational revenue while keeping the overall tax burden rate virtually flat for community property owners:

- 2025 Actual Total Tax Rate (with bonds): 5.4022

- 2026 Estimated Total Tax Rate (with bonds): 5.4043

Next Steps
This tentative 2026 tax levy is on public display for the required 30-day period and the District will publish the required Truth in Taxation notice in the local press. The Truth in Taxation Public Hearing and the final levy will be presented to the Board for formal adoption at our regular meeting on December 2nd, ensuring the district satisfies the statutory filing deadline of the last Tuesday in December.