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### **Conducting successful bond elections**

A school board's decision to put a bond levy on the ballot should trigger a number of district information and community-sponsored activities. These activities should involve a cross-section of key community members in the decision-making process, show voters the merits of the district's proposal, and help advocacy committees focus on methods of gaining voter support.

Following are roles and responsibilities for board members, administrators, staff, parents, students and community members in a bond election campaign.

#### **School board members**

- Involve citizens in determining building/bond priorities. Follow citizen advice as closely as possible in determining bond levy projects and amount.
- Conduct a community survey to determine community understanding of and support for the bond proposal and its various components.
- Vote *unanimously* on final bond proposal.
- Become advocates. Participate in citizen-run campaign activities; volunteer to accompany school personnel giving informational presentations so that you can encourage those present to vote yes. As long as board members are not using district staff time or resources, they can, and have a responsibility to, advocate for passage of measures they vote to put on the ballot.

#### **Superintendent and administrators**

- Help the board identify staff, parents and other community members who should be involved in planning and/or campaign processes.
- Provide information about the bond levy to staff, parents and community groups/members and be prepared to answer their questions.
- Assist in voter registration efforts and in providing opportunities for public discussion of the bond measure.
- Support advocacy activities as appropriate.

#### **Staff (classified and certified)**

- Know about the bond levy measure and be prepared to answer student, parent and community questions.
- Volunteer to work with the citizen advocacy campaign during non-work time.

### **Parents and community leaders**

- Know about the bond levy measure and be prepared to answer questions.
- Volunteer to take leadership roles in or work with the citizen advocacy campaign.

### **Students**

Generally, students should not be involved in campaign activities. However, high school students (civics classes, student councils) sometimes ask to be involved. Appropriate student tasks include:

- Conducting a voter registration drive to register 18-year-olds and recent high school graduates.
- Contacting alumni to encourage them to vote.
- Helping produce an informational video or slide presentation about the bond measure.

### **Preparing district information**

- Use survey data to write the 175-word ballot title summary and 500-word voters' pamphlet ballot explanation. Have bond counsel review ballot title and explanation after it is written using key messages from survey data.
- Prepare a brief (one-page) summary of the bond proposal to use at presentations for staff and others to use as a quick reference in talking about the bond proposal.
- Meet with all staff (classified and certified) and parent groups to discuss the bond proposal. Discuss importance of their being informed and able to answer questions from the public. Respond to and record all staff/parent questions for reference in producing district newsletters.
- Meet with community groups, as requested to discuss bond proposal. Consider presentations that include a district representative to present the

facts and a board member or advocacy committee representative to advocate support.

- Consider producing and mailing two brochures to community members regarding the bond proposal. The first mailing, sent to all households and out-of-state absentee voters, should include a summary of the facilities committee's report, details regarding the bond levy amount, election and voter registration information. The second mailing to all registered voter households should include the ballot title and explanation, questions and answers, and election information. If this information is included in first mailing, consider sending a postal card reminder to vote using key messages.

### **Citizen advocacy campaign activities**

- An advocacy committee should have at least three months to conduct a campaign.
- The advocacy committee should have a simple organization focused on identifying and turning out the number of "yes" voters required to pass the bond measure.
- Activities to reach identified voters should be personalized, e.g., telephoning, personalized letters, hand-written postal cards, hand-addressed brochures, door-to-door canvassing in key precincts.
- An effort should be made to reach those most likely to vote:
  - Voters requesting mail ballots for all elections.
  - Newly registered voters.
  - Voters with preschool and school-age children.
- The advocacy committee should check parent and staff lists against the voter registration list to see if a voter registration drive is required to get more parents and all in-district staff registered to vote. (This activity should take place early in the campaign and can actually be conducted by parent groups early in the school year.)
- Activities should be prioritized based on available resources — volunteers, dollars and in-kind contributions — and listed on the campaign calendar developed for accomplishing campaign goals.

- A delegation of district and committee members should attend an OSBA Sustainable Schools Conference to find out more about successful campaign strategies and available resources.