



**GOVERNING BOARD AGENDA ITEM  
AMPHITHEATER UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT NO. 10**

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**DATE OF MEETING: June 11, 2024**

**TITLE: Approval of Resolution Ordering and Calling a Special Maintenance and Operation Budget Override Election to be Held In and For Amphitheater Unified School District No. 10 of Pima County, Arizona, on November 5, 2024 and Providing for Notice of the Election, the Conduct of the Election, the Establishment of a Deadline by the County School Superintendent to Submit Arguments “For” or “Against” the Override Authority, the Printing of Ballots and the Canvassing of the Election**

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**BACKGROUND:**

The Governing Board last called for an override election in 2018. At that time, the Board called for both a renewal of the existing and long-standing 10% override in place at that time, as well as a separate and new 3.5% override for the express purpose of supporting K-3 programs in the District. As the Board is aware, both of these overrides were approved by District voters in 2018 and took effect in the 2020 fiscal year.

As stated previously, and also well understood by the Board, both overrides are about to begin their expiration unless renewed in this November’s General Election. In the last two Board meetings, the Administration has briefed the Governing Board on the background and history associated with the overrides currently in place and the dependence of the District upon these vital and essential funding sources for equally essential District programs.

At the risk of being repetitious of previous agenda items, some review of background and status follows to provide context for the Superintendent’s recommendation at this specific time for renewal of the current overrides and, more specifically, for the Board’s approval of the presented resolution.

**The Original and Current 10% Override**

The original (and still current) maintenance and operations budget override was initially approved by the District’s voters in 2005, and was subsequently renewed in 2009, 2014, and 2018. It begins to phase out after next fiscal year if not renewed in November. The existing budget override provides important benefits for the students of Amphitheater Public Schools, through class size reduction, fine arts instruction, intervention programs for struggling students, and other programs -- all of which could no longer be funded absent renewal of the override.

It is important to note that the original override was recommended and proposed by a Blue Ribbon Committee of constituents twenty years ago. To this very day, the District continues to use the override funds for the purposes originally recommended by that panel of citizenry.

**The Current 3.5% K-3 Override**

Separate K-3 budget overrides of up to five percent (5%) have been available for some time, but the Amphitheater District has only had such an override in place for the last four fiscal years following the 2018 approval. School districts also have the option to seek a single and combined maintenance and operations budget override which includes K-3 components, or may seek two separate questions – one for maintenance and operations and one dedicated to K-3 programs. In 2018, the Board sent two separate questions to the District’s voters. The Superintendent now proposes, for this simultaneous renewal, that the overrides be combined – as also suggested by Board Members.

## The Historical Benefits of the Overrides

With all school districts across the state having experienced some of the most severe cuts to educational funding in the entire nation<sup>1</sup>, Amphitheater has been able to buffer the impact of such cuts because of the overrides. State funding increases in recent years are celebrated by some legislators, but they shamefully omit to mention that even with those increases, the legislature has only restored 18% of the funds it took from schools and the current state education funding level remains nearly \$1 billion less than what it was in 2008!<sup>2</sup>

The Maintenance and Operations Override has served our District's students throughout decades of decline with additional funds that enabled the hiring of additional teachers; lowering of class sizes; expansion of Art, Music, and Physical Education for the elementary grades; expansion of course offerings for the middle and high school, and intervention programs to assist struggling students year round; hiring of sorely needed facilities and technology employees; and support of staff pay.

The funds derived from the current K-3 budget override have been nothing short of transformative in our District over the last 4 years. It restored the ability of the District to provide free full-day Kindergarten at every Amphitheater elementary school. It eliminated Kindergarten tuition costs for hundreds of District families and it allowed high-poverty schools to repurpose badly needed federal funds to student intervention programs, because those funds no longer had to support all-day K. The K-3 override has also funded literacy intervention programs and reduced class sizes in grades K through 3 by 5 to 8 students per classroom.

## A "Cost Neutral" Proposition

While the benefits of the overrides have been remarkable and the loss of those benefits would be catastrophic to the District and its students and staff, the cost of continuing the overrides is a net sum of *zero*. If the overrides are renewed, together, under a combined level of thirteen and one-half percent (13.5%), there would be no increase in the existing override tax.

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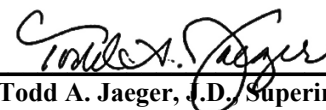
### RECOMMENDATION:

The Superintendent recommends that the Governing Board approve the attached form of resolution ordering and calling for a Special Maintenance and Operation Budget Override Election on November 5, 2024 for the purposes and on the terms stated therein.

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**INITIATED BY:**

**Date: June 5, 2024**



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Todd A. Jaeger, J.D., Superintendent

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<sup>1</sup> Education Law Center

<sup>2</sup> Arizona School Boards Association; ArizonaSchoolsNow.Org; Expect More Arizona; Arizona Education Association.