

fact\$ *in a backpack*

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Voters control revenue increases

Why do school districts keep asking for more money?

Property owners frequently and fairly ask their officials this question during tax levy campaigns. They receive their tax bills and find themselves paying more out of pocket yet school districts still claim they need more money.

This common confusion results from a 1976 tax reform measure designed to protect property owners from unvoted tax increases. House Bill 920 applies to school districts, cities and townships.

When voters approve a tax levy, they agree to pay a specific amount of money for a specific purpose over a specific time period. A homeowner's share of that amount depends on how much their home is worth. When property values fluctuate, House Bill 920 goes to work to make sure that the total amount of money the voters agreed to pay does not increase.

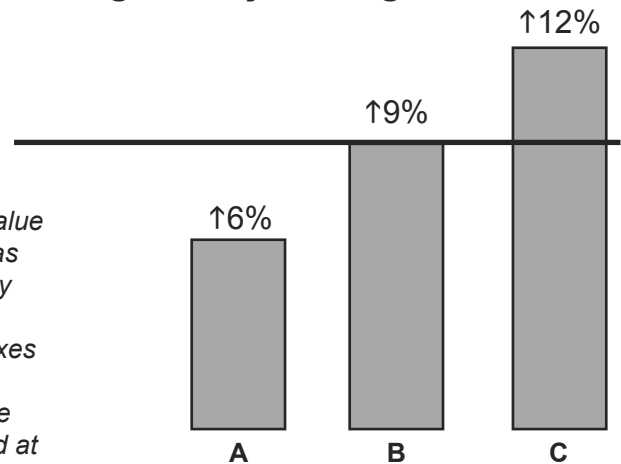
Suppose a school district receives voter approval to raise \$5 million through a 3-mill levy. The following year, after a reappraisal, property values have increased. House Bill 920 does not allow the school district to receive any additional revenue from this voted levy. The voted 3 mills will be reduced to a millage amount that will generate \$5 million, and each taxpayer will pay a lower "effective" tax rate. In order for the school system to raise more revenue, it must go to the voters for approval of another levy.

For example, when West Carrollton School District voters approved a 6.9 mill property tax levy in November 2003, they agreed to pay \$3.2 million as a group to the district each year for three years. The key number to remember is not the millage amount, but the dollar amount. That dollar amount is divided among the district property owners according to the value of their property. Individual property values are determined by the county auditor.

Property value changes vary throughout WCSD

Average district property value increase: 9%

In 2006, the average residential property value increase in WCSD was 9 percent. A's property value increased less than 9 percent, his taxes went down. B's taxes stayed the same since his property increased at the same rate as the district average. C's taxes went up since his property's value increased at a faster rate than the district as a whole.



Owner	2003 taxes	2006 taxes
A	\$500	\$485
B	\$500	\$500
C	\$500	\$515

**Note: Numbers here are for illustrative purposes only. Illustration discusses only voted millage.*

When property in the district was reappraised in 2006, many individual property owners saw their tax bills increase. However, other property owners saw their bills decrease. The "bill" for the \$3.2 million voters had agreed to was divided differently in 2004 and 2005 than it was in 2006 and will be in 2007. The state auditor reduced the 6.9 millage amount so that the overall "bill" did not exceed what voters had agreed to pay. (It is now 6.83 mills.)

If the value of your property increased by exactly the same percentage as the value of the property in the district as a whole, the taxes for your property will stay the same. If the value of your property increased by less than the average, your taxes will decrease. If the value of your property increased by more than the average, your taxes will increase.

Reappraisal of properties means

the collection of the same amount of taxes by redistributing the property taxes to be collected. Some property owners pay more, some less and some the same. While the total tax dollars raised stays the same because schools are on a fixed income, an individual taxpayer's share will be based on his new property value. In this way, House Bill 920 equalizes the burden of a voted tax.

School districts do not get more money when property values increase. House Bill 920 makes sure of it. Cities, townships and other taxing entities face the same issue. They are all on fixed incomes. However, expenses are not fixed. Costs for insurance, utilities and quality personnel continually rise. Hence, school districts, cities and other entities must return to voters regularly and ask them to agree to pay more.

West Carrollton Schools' revenue only grows if voters allow it to grow.

WCSD purchases new buses

WCSD will be buying three new school buses that will result in a long-term savings for the transportation department.

The district is buying two standard buses and one bus for students with handicaps at a total cost of \$203,711. Funding for the purchase includes \$150,000 from the district's capital improvements levy.

The buses are compliant with new emissions standards and more expensive than previous purchases, said Business Manager Dana Green.

The diesel buses with automatic transmission replace the last three buses in the fleet that were standard shift, Green added. The buses being

replaced were also gas buses.

Green said the district will save money in maintenance because the new buses will not have clutches that typically need to be replaced several times over the life of a bus. Overall, maintenance on diesel buses is also less expensive than on gasoline buses.

The biggest savings, however, is in fuel economy. Although diesel fuel is more expensive than gasoline, it is much more efficient. WCSD's diesel buses get 8 miles to the gallon, compared to as little as 2 miles to the gallon for gasoline-powered buses.

The district's two remaining gasoline-powered buses are scheduled to be replaced next year.

District receives Lions' property

The West Carrollton Lions Club formally turned over its property on Main Street to the West Carrollton School District on January 3.

The building, also known as the Scout House, was constructed in the late 1940s and operated for many years by local Girl Scout troops. During the peak growth periods of West Carrollton Schools, classes were sometimes held in the building as new schools were planned or constructed.

The Lions Club sold the building to the district for \$1, contributed by an anonymous donor. The Club had

become concerned with the property tax liability of the building. The district is exempt from property taxes.

In addition to the small fee, the district has also made several guarantees to the Club. Specifically, the district will provide the Lions with a place to hold meetings and fund-raisers several times a year. This guarantee is in place as long as the Club exists, said Business Manager Dana Green.

The district will not be renting the building to the public but may use it for meetings or events as needed.

Ohio CORE becomes law with changes

In the November 2006 edition of fact\$, details of The Ohio Core plan were discussed. In one of his last acts in office, Gov. Bob Taft signed the program into law.

Current law requires high school students to have 21 credits to graduate. Core does not increase the number of credits required to graduate but it changes the specific course requirements to include more math and science.

A foreign language requirement in the original proposal was dropped in the final law.

The final law also requires the changes to be implemented two years later than originally proposed. Students in the Class of 2014 – currently fifth graders – will need to meet the requirements of Core.

Specifically, Core requires the following classes: four years of math,

including Algebra II; four years of English; three years of lab-based science, including physical science and biology and one year selected from among chemistry, physics or higher-level biology; three years of social studies.

At West Carrollton High School, the Class of 2007 must have 24 credits to graduate. Specific course requirements include: four credits of English; four credits of social studies including World Studies, American History and U.S. Government and Politics; three credits of math; three credits of science, including one each of biological sciences and physical sciences; one credit of health and physical education combined; one credit of business; one credit of practical arts; and one credit of fine arts.

The entire WCHS course catalog is available online at www.westcarrolltonschools.com.



During levy campaigns, you will frequently hear the word "mill." It's important for all voters to know what mill does and does not mean.

A mill is a unit of tax. It does NOT stand for million in this usage. For example, when WCSD passed a 6.9 mill levy in 2003, it did NOT generate \$6.9 million. It generated \$3.2 million.

What a mill is worth varies by community. In the West Carrollton School District, one mill will generate \$421,000 in revenue. In the Miami-burg School District (our closest neighbor), one mill will generate \$910,000 in revenue. In the Kettering School District (most like WCSD in size and population), one mill will generate \$1.3 million in revenue.

Why the difference? Property values fluctuate from community to community. Value could be driven by its use (factories are usually worth more than houses) or by its age.

Another factor is the number of properties in the community. Larger communities often find one mill generates more tax dollars than in a smaller community.

**Got a question?
Still think the
pieces don't fit?**

**TELL US ABOUT
YOUR CONCERN!**

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