

Fire Protection District No. 3 (Lacey)

Proposition No. 1 - Levy Lid Lift

The Board of Fire Commissioners of Fire Protection District No. 3, Thurston County, Washington, (Lacey Fire District 3) adopted Resolution No. 788-05-08 concerning a proposition to restore the District's regular property tax levy. The proposition would authorize the District to restore its regular property tax levy to an amount not to exceed \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value for collection in 2009 to pay increases in operational costs, and set the limit factor at 100% plus the annual percentage change in the Consumer Price Index (as identified in the Resolution) for each of the five succeeding years (2010-2014). The 2014 levy amount will be used to calculate subsequent levy limits.

Should this proposition be:

- Approved
 Rejected

Explanatory Statement:

This proposition will authorize Thurston County Fire Protection District No. 3 to restore its regular property tax levy to the maximum statutory rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value for collection in 2009, and permit the annual levy amount to increase by the rate of inflation measured by the Consumer Price Index (but not to exceed the rate of \$1.50) for each of the next five years (2010-2014). The 2014 levy amount will be used to calculate subsequent levy limits.

The voters previously restored the District's regular property tax levy to the maximum rate of \$1.50 in 2004. Because of the statutory 1% limitation on property tax increases, the District's current levy rate is \$1.04. Due to population growth, continuing inflation and increased demand for services, the District's current levy rate is inadequate to pay increases in operational costs. Approval of this proposition would allow the District to restore its levy rate to \$1.50 to maintain the current reduced level of services and prevent further cutbacks in services and increased response times.

*Explanatory Statement Prepared By: James McNeill, III,
Foster Pepper PLLC*

Statement For:

In the face of increased costs and limited revenue, Fire District No. 3 reduced emergency response staffing in June 2008. This change follows previous reductions of administrative and support staff. Approval of this levy lid lift request will enable the Fire District to just maintain this reduced level of response to our community's fire and emergency medical needs.

The population of the Fire District has grown more than 6% since 1998. However, the Fire District is now responding to 60% more emergency calls than in 1998. We expect this trend to continue as more people dial 911 when confronted with an emergency.

Currently, District No. 3 protects more than 43,000 residents and property valued at almost \$4.8 billion over a 54 square mile area. In 2007, firefighters responded to over 3,904 District calls for emergency assistance including 3,204, which were for emergency medical services. These emergencies, which occur every hour of the day, every day of the week, continue to increase more than our population growth.

We met the increase in service demand with a proportionate increase in Firefighter/EMT staff who deliver the service through four 24-hour staffed and one volunteer station in key locations throughout the community.

In the face of these challenges, District No. 3 maintains an extremely high quality, caring service delivered by dedicated personnel at half the cost, per person, of several comparable jurisdictions.

When you call, Fire District No. 3 responds. Your help is needed to assure they can continue to serve you.

Statement Prepared By: K. Frank Kirkbride, Skip Houser, John Christiansen

Statement Against:

Fire District 3 has wasted money, misspent money and squandered money – and now they ask for more money. They were told when they spent more than \$20 million for new fire stations and new equipment, that they wouldn't have enough money to pay for it all, and yet they continued.

Of the thousands of calls the department gets each year, less than 2 percent of them are fire calls. Yet, over the last three years, Fire District 3 has given its firefighters a 50 percent pay raise while at the same time cutting the hours they have to work.

The City of Lacey, which contracts with Fire District 3 for services, was so concerned about the over-spending that it sent the district a six-page letter spelling out its concerns.

Before we give Fire District 3 – more money – they need to have better accountability for their spending.

Vote NO on lifting the property tax lid.

Statement Prepared By: Michael G. Jackson

Rebuttal of the Statement For:

The argument is not about the increased call upon the fire services, almost all in the way of ambulance services, but the lack of accountability concerning how funds are spent. Simply giving more money to the Fire District without demanding wisdom with this spending isn't going to create better service, only bigger bills for the taxpayer of the District. By turning down this increase the district will have to focus at it's recent spending spree and double digit wage increases.

Rebuttal of the Statement Against:

District 3 spent \$5.9 million – not \$20 million – for stations and equipment. All voter approved projects were completed within budget and serve the public today. This levy lid lift is for operational expenses, not capital projects. In 2007, 9,507 calls for help include 76% EMS and 3.6% fire with the rest for service and hazard incidents. The District approved wage adjustments of 2.7% in 2006, 3.3% in 2007, and a 17% contract adjustment in 2008.