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**Chamber Endorses CPS Levy and Bond Proposals**

Columbia, Mo. – The Columbia Chamber of Commerce Board of Directors voted to support the passage of the Columbia Public Schools (CPS) operating levy increase and the no-tax-rate-increase bond issue on the upcoming election. The Chamber endorses YES votes on April 5, 2016 for the following ballot proposals:

Tax Levy

If the tax levy is passed, there will be an increase of the operating tax by \$0.65 per \$100 of assessed value. The revenue would go towards maintaining current programs, providing support for an increasing student enrollment and assisting in recruiting high-quality faculty. CPS adjusted operating tax levy ceiling is estimated to be \$5.1437 per \$100 of assessed value.

The tax levy increase is estimated to generate an additional \$14 million in annual revenue. Those funds will be used to:

- Maintain continued operations and stop planned deficit spending as the school district continues to grow.
- Operations in new buildings including increased costs for utilities, transportation and required staffing.
- Comply with unfunded state and federal mandates, such as homeless student transportation and federal nutrition requirements.
- Support student needs for access to achievement and enrichment opportunities.
- Recruitment and retention of high quality employees.

“Education is one of the most important economic development tools,” Columbia Chamber of Commerce President Matt McCormick said. “The city with the best schools win and Columbia cannot afford to let CPS fall behind other school districts in the state.”

No-Tax-Rate-Increase Bond Issue

If the bond issue is passed, Columbia Public Schools will issue \$30-million worth of bonds to pay for costs of

constructing, improving, extending, repairing, remodeling, renovating, furnishing and equipping new and existing school facilities. It would also be for acquiring land to develop and prepare plans for a new middle school. The bonds would also go towards construction additions to two elementary schools, renovating and expanding a cafeteria kitchen, improving outdoor middle school athletic facilities, repairing or replacing roofs, windows, parking lots and heating and air conditioning. The bonds would also help improve technology within the school district.

More specifically, Columbia Public Schools plans to allocate the money for three main areas:

- Construction - \$20 million will be used for new construction and future growth plans, including:
  - \$6 million will be used to purchase land and design a new middle school to alleviate middle school overcrowding in south Columbia.
  - \$11 million for elementary school addition(s) to address continued community growth and eliminate trailers.
  - \$3 million for a kitchen expansion at Gentry Middle School to address growth and allow for more freshly prepared food. Currently, two middle schools, Smithton and Lange, are equipped with regional kitchen space for meal preparation for the school district.
- Building Improvements - \$8 million will be used for building improvements.
  - \$5 million for safety and security improvements, renovation and repair of buildings, HVAC systems, exterior paving and electrical systems.
  - \$2 million for roof replacements and repairs.
  - \$1 million for outdoor athletic improvements at Gentry, Lange and Smithton middle schools. The middle schools are in need of tracks in order to be similar with Jefferson, Oakland and West middle schools.
- Technology - \$2 million for wireless network infrastructure expansion, replacement of network switches, servers and storage area networks.

“Teaching and learning facilities are a big factor in a student’s ability to learn,” McCormick said. “Businesses want to operate in a city where its employees and their families can be happy. Along with that, they want to be located in a city with public schools that regularly produce work-ready employees. If we want Columbia business to continue to prosper, we need to invest into our public school facilities.”

For more details on the levy or bond issue, you can visit the [Columbia Public Schools website](#).

For questions about Chamber endorsements, please contact Brad Johnson at (573) 817-9108 or email [bjohnson@ColumbiaMOChamber.com](mailto:bjohnson@ColumbiaMOChamber.com).

The Columbia Chamber of Commerce was established in 1905 and is a voluntary, member-supported organization of business, industrial and professional people who are dedicated to developing, promoting and maintaining a sound and healthy economic climate for Columbia. The Columbia Chamber of Commerce has been recognized as a 5-Star Accredited Chamber by the United States Chamber of Commerce.

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