

Alameda Teacher/Staff Retention: Measure A

The Question

“To support all Alameda students and maintain high-quality Alameda schools by attracting and retaining excellent teachers and employees, sustaining strong academic programs in reading, writing, math, arts/sciences, and helping counselors support struggling students, shall an Alameda Unified School District measure, levying 26.5¢ per building area square foot (capped at \$7,999 per parcel) and \$299 per vacant parcel annually for 6 years, be adopted, raising \$10,500,000 annually with senior exemptions, audits, oversight, and all funds staying locally?”

The Situation

Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) teachers and staff are among the lowest paid in the county. Many teachers need a second job to support themselves and their families. Every year AUSD loses nearly 20% of its teachers and staff to other school districts largely due to low pay and fewer benefits. According to California Teachers Association’s 2016-17 numbers, AUSD teachers ranked second lowest among districts with an average annual compensation of \$78,634, which is 9.7 percent below the county average of \$88,851. In 2018, the District reduced its budget by \$3.5 million, cutting programs and services and laying off teachers to give employees a 4.5% raise.

The Proposal

Measure A is a Parcel Tax dedicated to increase AUSD teacher and staff salaries and benefits. If Measure A is approved, the District will levy an annual special tax on all Alameda Parcels of Taxable Real Property beginning July 1, 2020 for a period of 7 years. The Tax will be levied at the rate of 26.5¢ per building square foot not to exceed \$7,999 per parcel and at the rate of \$299 per vacant parcel. The Tax would cost the average homeowner \$424 per year. A portion of the revenues (9.5%) will be dedicated annually to support Alameda students in existing public charter schools located in Alameda in proportion to their enrollment of Alameda resident students. The funds can be used solely for salary and benefit increases for employees. Annual exemptions to the Parcel Tax will be granted to principal residences owned by one or more persons age 65 years or older and to principal residences owned by one or more persons receiving Social Security Disability Insurance Benefits, regardless of age.

Fiscal Effect

This Measure is estimated to raise \$10,500,000 in annual local funding for AUSD schools. Funds will be deposited into a separate account and the District will provide three reports to the Board of Education and the public each year. Additionally, a new District Oversight Committee will review annually the District’s compliance with the terms of the Measure. The following will be deducted from the funds raised by the Tax: cost of the Parcel Tax election, authorized charges by the county or city related to the tax, payment of fees and expenses to administer or defend the District’s Tax, and costs to implement accountability provisions.

What a Yes Vote Means

The District is authorized to levy a Parcel Tax for seven years to increase teacher and employee salary and benefits.

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What a No Vote Means

The District is not authorized to levy a new Parcel Tax.

Supporters say

- The Measure would assist in retaining and attracting teachers and staff and reduce turnover of teachers and staff.
- The Measure would assist in recruiting teachers for hard-to-find subject areas such as special education and math.
- The Measure requires strict fiscal accountability.

Opponents say

- This is the fourth educational tax for Alameda Voters and is not a sustainable long-term solution.
- Measure A would be one more regressive tax. A better option is for the State to fund schools through a progressive tax such as the income tax.
- If Schools and Communities First is passed in November, then 40% of the \$12B will go to California schools.

Supporters

Margie Sherratt, Alameda Resident
Kevin Graham, Alameda Teacher
Cara Cavanaugh, Alameda Realtor
Rob Bonta, California State Assembly-member
Jeff DelBono, Alameda Firefighter
Strongschoolsforalameda.org

Opponents

No formal opposition at this time.

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