

VOTER'S PAMPHLET

MEASURES, ANALYSES AND ARGUMENTS

(whichever is applicable to your ballot)
Arguments in support of, or in opposition to, the proposed laws are the opinions of the authors.

SOQUEL UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT

S EDUCATION IMPROVEMENT MEASURE. To provide stable funding for New Brighton Middle, Main Street, Opal Cliffs, Santa Cruz Gardens and Soquel Elementary for academic programs in reading, writing, math and science, attracting and retaining quality teachers, smaller class sizes, school libraries/librarians, maintaining art and music programs, shall Soquel Union Elementary School District levy an education tax of \$90 per parcel for eight years with citizen oversight, exempting senior citizens, no funds for administrators' salaries, and all funds staying local?

FULL TEXT OF BALLOT MEASURE S

SOQUEL UNION ELEMENTARY SCHOOL DISTRICT
Core Academic Programs Parcel Tax Measure S

INTRODUCTION AND PURPOSE

To ensure reliable funding for Soquel schools that cannot be taken by the State, **protect academic programs in reading, writing, math and science and attract and retain highly qualified teachers, provide advanced math, science and other courses for high-performing students, protect school libraries and librarians and maintain smaller class size, with no proceeds used for administrative salaries and benefits, the Soquel Union Elementary School District ("District") proposes to establish a core academic programs parcel tax for a period of eight years, beginning July 1, 2013, at the rate of \$90 per year, on each assessor's parcel located within the Soquel Union Elementary School District, with an exemption available for senior citizens and recipients of SSI for a disability, and to implement strict accountability measures, including independent citizen oversight, to ensure the funds are used to:**

- Protect core academic programs in reading, writing, math and science;
- Maintain advanced math, science and other courses for high-performing students;
- Attract and retain highly qualified teachers;
- Support smaller class sizes;
- Retain school libraries and librarians;
- Maintain art and music programs; and
- Keep schools safe and clean

AMOUNT OF CORE ACADEMIC PROGRAMS PARCEL TAX; PERIOD OF ASSESSMENT

The core academic programs parcel tax shall be \$90 (or less as provided below) per year for eight (8) full years assessed against each Parcel.

The proceeds of the core academic programs parcel tax shall be deposited into a separate account created by the District.

DEFINITION OF "PARCEL"

For purposes of the core academic programs parcel tax, the term "Parcel" means any parcel of land which lies wholly or partially within the boundaries of the Soquel Union Elementary School District, that receives a separate tax bill for *ad valorem* property taxes from the Santa Cruz County Assessor/Tax Collector. All property that is otherwise exempt from or upon which are levied no *ad valorem* property taxes in any year shall also be exempt from the core academic programs parcel tax in such year.

For purposes of this core academic programs parcel tax, any such "Parcels" which are (i) contiguous, and (ii) used solely for owner-occupied, single-family residential purposes, and (iii) held under identical ownership may, by submitting an application of the owners thereof by June 15 of each year to the District, be treated as a single "parcel" for purposes of the levy of the core academic programs parcel tax.

EXEMPTION FOR SENIORS AND SSI RECIPIENTS

Pursuant to California Government Code Section 50079 (b), any owners of a Parcel used solely for owner-occupied, single-family residential purposes and who are either (a) 65 years of age or older or (b) persons receiving Supplemental Security Income for a disability, regardless of age, **may obtain an exemption** from the core academic programs parcel tax by annually submitting an application therefore, by June 15 of each year, to the District.

With respect to all general property tax matters within its jurisdiction, the Santa Cruz County Assessor/Tax Collector, or other appropriate county tax officials shall make all final determinations of tax exemption or relief for any reason, and that decision shall be final and binding. With respect to matters specific to the levy of the core academic programs parcel tax, including the Senior Citizen Exemption and the SSI Exemption and the classification of property for purposes of calculating the tax, the decisions of the District shall be final and binding.

REDUCTION IN TAX IF RESULT IS LESS OTHER GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The collection of the core academic programs parcel tax is not intended to decrease or offset any increase in local, state or federal government revenue sources that would otherwise be available to the District during the period of the core academic programs parcel tax. In the event that the levy and collection does have such an effect, the District shall cease the levy or shall reduce the core academic programs parcel tax to the extent that such action would restore the amount of the decrease or offset in other revenues.

ACCOUNTABILITY MEASURES

In accordance with the requirements of California Government Code Sections 50075.1 and 50075.3, the following accountability measures, among others, shall apply to the core academic programs parcel tax levied in accordance with this Measure: (a) the specific purposes of the core academic programs parcel tax shall be those purposes identified above; (b) the proceeds of the core academic programs parcel tax shall be applied only to those specific purposes identified above; (c) a separate, special account shall be created into which the proceeds of the core academic programs parcel tax must be deposited; and (d) an annual written report shall be made to the Board of Trustees of the District showing (i) the amount of funds collected and expended from the proceeds of the core academic programs parcel tax and (ii) the status of any projects or programs required or authorized to be funded from the proceeds of the core academic instruction parcel tax, as identified above. **Further, the Board of Trustees will establish a process for independent citizen oversight.**

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IMPARTIAL ANALYSIS BY COUNTY COUNSEL
MEASURE S

If this measure is approved by at least two-thirds of those voting on it, the Soquel Union Elementary School District ("the School District") will be authorized to levy a special tax on real property. The tax would be imposed for eight years beginning July 1, 2013, at the rate of \$90 per year on each parcel within the School District.

The proceeds of the special tax, if approved, may be applied only to the purposes set out in the full text of Measure S which is printed in this pamphlet. It may not be used for administrators' salaries or benefits.

In accordance with State law, the School District Board would implement accountability measures. It would create a separate account into which the proceeds of the special tax shall be deposited. An annual written report would show the amount of the special taxes which have been collected and expended, and the status of projects to be funded from those proceeds.

The special parcel tax is to be collected in the same manner as those property taxes which are based upon property value.

Property owners who are 65 years of age or older or who are receiving Supplemental Security Income for a disability regardless of age, whose property is used solely for owner-occupied, single family residential purposes, may obtain an exemption from the parcel tax by applying annually to the School District. An owner of contiguous parcels meeting specified criteria may also apply annually to have the parcels treated as a single parcel for purposes of the tax.

The School District Board of Trustees proposes to reduce this parcel tax if it should develop that it has an unintended effect of decreasing or offsetting local, state or federal government funding sources that would otherwise be available to the School District.

Any necessary increases in the School District's appropriations limit will be accomplished pursuant to State law, in order to permit proceeds of the special tax to be spent for the authorized purposes.

A "yes" vote is to approve imposition of the special parcel tax.

A "no" vote is against imposition of the special parcel tax.

DANA McRAE, COUNTY COUNSEL
By Jane M. Scott, Assistant County Counsel

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ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE S

Vote YES on S to protect strong educational programs and retain qualified teachers in our Soquel and Capitola neighborhood elementary and middle schools.

Whether they attend New Brighton Middle, Main Street, Opal Cliffs, Santa Cruz Gardens or Soquel Elementary, local children receive a strong foundation in math, science, reading and writing. In fact, student achievement is on the rise, with statewide test scores increasing each year.

To protect education in our community and continue preparing students for success in high school, college and careers, Measure S is essential.

Since 2008, our schools have experienced \$1.3 million in cuts due to state reductions in education funding, causing increased class sizes, reductions to art and music programs and cuts to school library services. We cannot rely on the State to provide a strong education for the students in our community.

Measure S provides stable education funding for our schools—the State cannot take a single penny.

Measure S continues student success in Soquel and Capitola

- Protects academic programs in reading, writing, math, science and technology
- Maintains advanced math and science programs for high-performing students
- Attracts and retains qualified teachers
- Supports smaller class sizes
- Maintains school libraries
- Maintains art and music programs
- Keeps schools safe and clean

Financial accountability and local oversight are required:

- All funds go directly to our local schools and cannot be taken by the State
- A Citizen Oversight Committee and annual reports ensure fiscal accountability
- No funds may be spent on administrators' salaries
- Expires in 8 years and cannot be extended without voter approval
- A senior citizen homeowners' exemption is available

Even if we don't have children in school, we know strong schools support our local youth and keep our neighborhoods safe and our property values strong. Please join us and vote YES on S.

s/ John Leopold
Santa Cruz County Supervisor, 1st District

s/ Mimi Edgar
Retired Teacher and Soquel Resident

s/ Laurie Negro
Local Business Owner, Betty Burgers

s/ Molly Graessle
Soquel Union Elementary School Parent and Capitola Resident

s/ Joe Clarke
26 Years Local Law Enforcement

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT IN FAVOR OF MEASURE S

Measure S needs a 2/3rds "yes" vote to raise your property taxes but only a simple majority to extend it in a future election. Special off-cycle elections seem to draw more educated, involved voters who understand the value of education. Please don't be rooked by the slick verbiage of this Measure. If this were really about children and quality education, the board members would already be working across districts to consolidate schools and services, decrease administrators and negotiate teacher contracts that reward quality teachers not tenure.

This measure is about new funding for basic education so current money can be saved or diverted to build a new elementary school and increase pay for unions and administrators. This District cannot be trusted. The people voted NO on preschools but Soquel Union built Opal Cliff preschool anyway. Why should we trust them now?

Soquel Union is not a growing district. Parents volunteering in the library and any other place needed is a real plus. It promotes cooperation, provides oversight and saves needed financial resources. Grow the volunteers! Don't replace them with paid, benefited staff.

Eighty-three percent of us don't have children in the District schools. We have a right to expect our homes and limited resources will be respected. The District Board and Superintendent cannot claim the moral high ground simply by invoking children and education in a ballot measure. Protect your home and your neighbors'. Vote **NO** on Measure S.

s/ Sandra L. Erickson
Home Owner

s/ Mary Sue Leffel
Homeowner

s/ John Conrado
Home Owner

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ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE S

Your home is in the crosshairs of the Soquel Union Elementary School District. The election that passed Proposition 30 to raise sales tax for schools wasn't even certified when Soquel School District started spending limited school funds to poll voters, to prepare a four page color brochure for mailing to ask you to raise your taxes again, and better yet (if you are a senior), to **ask you to raise your neighbor's taxes**. Your home is not a piggy bank and in Santa Cruz County property values are **not** driven by the perceived quality of education.

The citizens of California have taken a real financial hit over the past five years. They are unemployed or underemployed and their home values have dropped or gone into foreclosure. The district expects to maintain business as usual and bemoans having to make difficult choices. Trimming \$300,000 a year from a \$14,000,000 budget is not draconian. When citizens are financially healthy again the schools will be also.

This District cannot be trusted. California residents voted NO on public preschools but Soquel Union built one in Jade Street Park for the express purpose of trying to grow the shrinking student population. There are about 1900 students in the four real schools. The district spends close to \$8000 per child. Teacher student ratios have increased but even 30 students in a class is a very small number compared to the not so distant past. Soquel Union will never think they have enough of our money!

What is the rush to have a special election? In May no less, by mail! They are trying to catch you off guard. Guard your property. VOTE NO ON MEASURE S

s/ Mary Sue Leffel
Home Owner

s/ Lawrence J. Borger
Home Owner

s/ Ellen A. Borger
Home Owner

s/ John D. Conrado
Home Owner

s/ Sandra L. Erickson
Home Owner

REBUTTAL TO ARGUMENT AGAINST MEASURE S

The few Measure S opponents simply don't know the facts.

Those who are voting YES on S—including local elected officials, business leaders, retirees and realtors—believe that quality education is a priority and understand that our excellent local schools benefit us all.

Here are the facts:

The State is an unreliable partner when it comes to education funding. Our local schools have experienced \$1.3 million in cuts since 2008, causing class size increases and academic program reductions. Proposition 30 does not provide a single dollar of additional funding or restore any of the cuts our schools have already endured.

Measure S provides our community with a vital solution, giving our schools the local control necessary to continue student achievement.

Every penny stays in our neighborhood schools—Sacramento can't take away one penny.

Soquel Union Elementary School District has a history of sound fiscal management. In this tradition, fiscal accountability is a key component of Measure S.

Measure S can only be used for specific educational priorities:

- Protecting academic programs
- Attracting and retaining qualified teachers
- Supporting smaller class sizes
- Maintaining school libraries
- Maintaining art and music programs
- Keeping schools safe and clean

Measure S cannot pay for administrators' salaries. A citizens' oversight committee will provide annual public reports, ensuring funds are spent as promised.

Seniors, who are on fixed incomes and have been contributing to our community for decades, are eligible for an exemption.

We know that Measure S is what our community and local students need.

Join us and vote YES on S.

s/ Ted Donnelly
Community Member

s/ Lou Tuosto
former SUESD Citizen Oversight Committee member and owner, Tuosto Insurance & Financial

s/ Jill Gallo
Program Coordinator Cabrillo College

s/ Jacob Young
Certified Financial Planner

s/ Ruth G. Fisher
local business owner/Dancenter