

# Voters back school-funding plans across central Indiana

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Referendums seeking millions of dollars in additional funding passed easily Tuesday in numerous central Indiana school districts.

Voters in Washington Township, Pike Township, Speedway, Carmel Clay and Noblesville approved higher tax rates to help prevent teacher cuts or support building projects.

Washington Township voters overwhelmingly approved a property-tax rate increase of 8 cents per \$100 of a property's assessed value. The money will go into the district's operating fund and could help avoid the layoffs of 55 teachers.

The district billed the plan, which received 72-percent approval, as "tax neutral" because the school board has already voted to reduce taxes that go into the capital-projects fund by an equal amount.

Pike Township's referendum, approved by nearly 70 percent of voters, raises taxes by 23 cents per \$100 of assessed valuation to build a new Guion Creek Elementary. The district also calls the plan tax-neutral, because the new tax, which starts in 2012, will replace a previous one used to fund renovations to Pike High School.

In other referendums:

— Carmel Clay voters approved a \$12 million annual property tax levy to keep the district from having to make drastic cuts and increase class sizes. The measure passed 58 percent to 42 percent. The hike will raise taxes on a median Carmel home by more than \$210 a year.

— Noblesville voters easily approved two referendums, one for \$5 million to cover operational expenses and another for \$63 million to fund school building projects. The district wants to build two middle schools and one elementary school, in addition to expanding five schools.

— Speedway Schools received approval from 86 percent of voters to raise property taxes an additional \$12 to \$29 per month to offset reductions in state funding.

The only area school districts to see their plans voted down were Western Boone County Community School Corp. and Eastern Hancock Schools.

Western Boone sought a 19-cent hike per \$100 in assessed valuation for six years, starting in 2011. The district said it would have to eliminate numerous employees to address a budget shortfall of \$850,000 without the tax hike, but 69 percent of voters shot down the plan.

Eastern Hancock sought a seven-year property tax increase of about \$55 annually on a \$100,000 home to address a \$400,000 shortfall in its general fund, but 68 percent of voters turned down the increase.