

# Frequently Asked Questions on Proposed Measure 34-296 Levy to Provide Funding for Countywide Public Safety Services

## General Questions

**Q: What current level of services would be funded if the proposed levy passes?**

A: If the measure passes, services funded at current service levels would include \$187.7 million for:

- A total of 168.5 County personnel in the Community Corrections Department, District Attorney's Office, Juvenile Department and Sheriff's Office. To continue current service levels as population grows, expenditures under the proposed levy would grow by an average of 6.2% annually. Examples of services that would be provided include:
  - Prosecution services addressing crimes throughout the county. (25.3 District Attorney's Office positions)
  - Treatment and supervision of those who may be released to the community, including compliance monitoring for registered sex offenders and others with court-ordered supervision requirements. (31 Community Corrections positions)
  - Supervision and treatment of juvenile offenders. (11 Juvenile Department positions)
  - Law enforcement personnel providing countywide services in investigations, forensics and special teams such as a mental health response team of deputies and mental health professionals helping people in crisis get medical assistance instead of going to jail. (101.25 Sheriff's Office positions)
    - Last year, nearly 37% of the Mental Health Response Team's 5,456 calls resulted in nontraditional law enforcement solutions such as helping individuals get immediate medical care or providing other follow-up.
  - Victims' assistance and emergency shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. (Approximately \$7 million over five years)
    - Levy funds would continue to support emergency shelter and other services provided by:
      - the Domestic Violence Resource Center,
      - Community Action,
      - Good Neighbor Center,
      - Family Promise of Washington County,
      - Boys and Girls Aid Society Safe Place, and
      - The Family Justice Center of Washington County.

**Q: What added services would be funded if the proposed levy passes?**

A: Services that would be added if the levy passes would include:

- In 2019, 624 child abuse cases were referred to the District Attorney's Office. This represents a 33% increase in the child abuse caseload over the last four years. If passed, the levy would provide funding for one additional prosecutor at a five-year cost of \$1.4 million. (1 District Attorney's Office position)
- In 2019, 985 domestic violence cases were filed, a 36% increase in caseload when compared to the previous year. If passed, the levy would provide funding for four additional parole and

probation officers responsible for addressing the increased domestic violence-related caseloads at a five-year cost of \$2.4 million. (4 Community Corrections Department positions)

- Of the 572 beds in the Washington County Jail, one 56-bed pod (10% of total jail-bed space) would be maintained through this portion of levy funding. If passed, the proposed levy would provide funding for four additional jail deputies at a five-year cost of \$2.8 million, allowing the jail to operate at full capacity and reduce early release of offenders. (4 Sheriff's Office positions)
- It would, if passed, provide \$1.5 million of funding over five years for contracted services with community-based organizations to divert juvenile offenders out of the criminal justice system, as appropriate on a case-by-case basis. Over the five years of the proposed levy, an estimated 1,000 youth projected to be eligible for this diversion program would be assessed, placed on a case plan and would participate in programming, outside of the criminal justice setting, as provided by a nonprofit organization.
- Funding to reduce the transition time from emergency shelter to housing for individuals and families, including survivors of domestic violence. Temporary shelters have seen a 70% increase in use over the last three years.
  - Proposed levy funding would provide \$1 million for rent assistance for domestic violence survivors and would also provide \$645,000 over five years for a "housing navigator" position to assist people in seeking housing and an employment specialist position to assist those seeking jobs. (2 positions within the nonprofit network of emergency shelter providers)

**Q: What is the Mental Health Response Team (MHRT)?**

A: The MHRT combines a deputy and mental health professional in the same patrol car to help people in crisis get medical assistance instead of going to jail. Last year, nearly 37% of the Mental Health Response Team's 5,456 calls resulted in nontraditional law enforcement solutions such as helping individuals get immediate medical care or providing other follow-up.

**Q: How many positions would the levy fund if the measure passes?**

A: The current levy has funded 160.5 of the 983.5 positions in the County's public safety system. If the proposed levy is approved, that number would increase over the five-year life of the levy to 177.5 County positions by 2025.

If passed, proposed levy funding would provide \$645,000 over five years for a "housing navigator" position to assist people in seeking housing and an employment specialist position to assist those seeking jobs.

**Q: If the levy passes, how would the levy funds be allocated in the various service areas (County Departments)?**

A: Estimated levy funds would, if passed, be divided over the five-year life of the levy as follows:

Sheriff's Office	\$120.3 million	61%
Community Corrections	\$31.0 million	16%
District Attorney's Office	\$25.0 million	13%
Juvenile Department	\$10.3 million	5%
Emergency Shelters/Nonprofit Services	\$8.8 million	4%
Other (9-1-1 center equipment, election fees, public outreach, etc.)	\$2.1 million	1%
<b>Total (including est. fund balance):</b>	<b>\$197.5 million</b>	<b>100%</b>

**Q: How much revenue would the proposed Public Safety Levy generate if passed?**

A: If the levy passes, approximately \$189.2 million would be provided over five fiscal years. The year-by-year totals would be:

\$34.7 million in 2021-2022

\$36.2 million in 2022-2023

\$37.8 million in 2023-2024

\$39.3 million in 2024-2025

\$41.0 million in 2025-2026

**Countywide vs. Cities or ESPD**

**Q: If the measure passes, what communities in the county would receive funding?**

A: The public safety services funded in part by the Public Safety Levy would be provided to all cities, urban unincorporated and rural areas of Washington County. The County would continue to provide the following services to various City police departments and to the unincorporated areas:

- Prosecution (attorneys and other personnel who represent the government when adjudicating criminal matters in state circuit court),
- Jail (a 572-bed, secured facility providing incarceration services to every policing agency in Washington County),
- Probation and parole (supervisory services to monitor offenders for compliance with court-ordered conditions for their release into the community instead of incarceration),
- Juvenile crime prevention (services to supervise youth offenders and aide their families and the victims of their offences with counseling, mediation, and other services as appropriate for each youth's situation),
- Special law enforcement teams (comprised of law enforcement officers and other personnel from city agencies and the County Sheriff's Office including the countywide Major Crimes Team, Crash Analysis Team, Tactical Negotiations Team, Mental Health Response Team and others),
- Other law enforcement services (such as forensics and investigations), and
- Victims' assistance and emergency shelter (including temporary shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence).

**Q: How is the proposed Public Safety Levy different from the Enhanced Sheriff’s Patrol District (ESPD) levy?**

A: The ESPD serves residents of urban unincorporated Washington County (outside cities). The ESPD levy has provided funding for a level of patrol (one officer per 1,000 urban unincorporated residents) that is similar to what neighboring cities provide. The proposed levy would help fund a countywide level of patrol services (roughly half an officer per 1,000 countywide residents) including both law enforcement for the unincorporated area and “supportive” law enforcement services for all areas of the county—including cities. Examples of supportive services include special investigations, special team support and mutual aid to other agencies. In addition, countywide public safety services funded by the Public Safety Levy include prosecution, jail, probation and parole, and juvenile crime prevention.

**Q: The City of Tigard has a local option levy measure on the ballot which, if passed, would pay for more police officers. How would the countywide Proposed Public Safety Levy relate to Tigard’s measure if passed?**

A: The question is appreciated. The County’s intent is to provide neutral information about the Washington County Public Safety Levy, so please check with officials at the City of Tigard for the details about their measure.

You can find more information about the proposed Public Safety Levy on the County website ([www.co.washington.or.us/levies](http://www.co.washington.or.us/levies)) and more about the City of Tigard’s levy at the City’s website ([https://www.tigard-or.gov/tigard\\_levy](https://www.tigard-or.gov/tigard_levy)) or by calling 503-718-2486.

**Shelters/Regional Measure**

**Q: Why would emergency shelters be funded through the proposed Public Safety Levy if it passes?**

A: In many cases, women and children can no longer safely reside in their homes after certain crimes have occurred. Replacement of the Public Safety Levy would continue to help pay for emergency shelters, including for women and children who are victims of domestic violence. If passed, about 5% of levy funds would be provided for emergency shelter and other services provided by the Domestic Violence Resource Center, Community Action, Good Neighbor Center, Family Promise, Boys and Girls Aid Society Safe Place and the Family Justice Center of Washington County.

**Q: If the measure passes, how would shelter funds relate to a regional tax measure to address homelessness?**

A: The question is appreciated. The County’s intent is to provide neutral information about the Washington County Public Safety Levy, so please check with officials with Metro for the details about this regional measure. This information can be found on the Metro website (<https://www.oregonmetro.gov/>) or by calling 503-797-1540.

More information about the County's Public Safety Levy can be found on the County website ([www.co.washington.or.us/levies](http://www.co.washington.or.us/levies).)

### Property Taxes/Rate Increase

**Q: If passed, how would the proposed levy affect a homeowner's taxes?**

A: The proposed levy would set a five-year, fixed rate of \$0.47 per \$1,000 of assessed value, an increase of \$0.05 per \$1,000 of assessed value. If approved, this would be the first increase in the rate since the original levy in the year 2000. In 2021, homeowners with an assessed value (not market value) of \$300,000 would pay \$141 per year, or about \$20 more than they paid in 2020.

If the proposed levy does not pass, these local option property taxes would not be levied. In 2021, typical homeowners, based on an average assessed value of \$300,000, would see a \$126 reduction in their property taxes. If the levy does not pass, the additional tax would not be charged, and residents would see reductions affecting prosecution, law enforcement, supervision, corrections and emergency shelters which would likely begin in 2021.

**Q: Why would the tax rate increase for the replacement levy if it is passed?**

A: Three factors would contribute to the proposed change in the original \$0.42 per \$1,000 of assessed value tax rate that has been in place for about 20 years:

- Costs out-pacing property tax revenue -- The cost of maintaining current service levels for the county's growing population, estimated to be 7% over the five years of the current levy, has out-paced revenue growth under Oregon's property tax system. In addition to wages and benefits, many of these costs are unique to law enforcement and other public safety positions including the purchase of specialized vehicles and other equipment, training costs, dispatch fees and so forth. By the end of the five-year life of the current Public Safety Levy (from FY 2015-16 to FY 2020-21), costs (including actuals and estimates) will have averaged about 9%, but assessed value growth during this same period has averaged 4.5%. To maintain a balanced budget during this time (FY 2015-16 to FY 2020-21), the County has used levy reserves.
- Domestic violence prosecution and child abuse -- In 2019, 985 domestic violence cases were filed, a 36% increase in caseload when compared to the previous year. In 2019, 624 child abuse cases were filed, representing a 33% increase in the child abuse caseload over the last four years. As these cases move through the criminal justice system, they result in the additional probation/parole supervision, additional beds in the Jail, additional beds in the Community Corrections Center and so forth.
- Increased community access to emergency shelter -- Although the overall number of people experiencing homelessness has been decreasing according to Washington County's annual point-in-time count over the last several years (measured at 950 in the year 2010 as opposed to 530 in 2019), those seeking temporary shelter – as opposed to those residing in camps, on the street or other areas outdoors – have increased 70% over the last three years (from 175 in 2017 to 298 in 2019).

**Q: Under Oregon’s property tax system, aren’t assessed values capped at 3% growth per year?**

A: Yes, Oregon’s property tax system allows assessed values on individual properties to grow up to 3% per year, with some exceptions such as when a home is remodeled and expanded.

Additionally, new development has increased the overall property tax base.

There are three factors related to the referral of this measure to voters, which if passed, would increase property tax rate from \$0.42 per \$1,000 assessed value to \$0.47 per \$1,000 assessed value, the first such increase in nearly 20 years:

- Costs out-pacing property tax revenue – Taking into consideration the 3% increase in assessed values allowed under Oregon law, the cost of maintaining current public safety service levels for the county’s growing population, estimated to be 7% over the five years of the current levy, has out-paced revenue growth under Oregon’s property tax system. In addition to wages and benefits, many of these costs are unique to law enforcement and other public safety positions including the purchase of specialized vehicles and other equipment, training costs, dispatch fees and so forth. By the end of the five-year life of the current Public Safety Levy (from FY 2015-16 to FY 2020-21), costs (including actuals and estimates) will have averaged about 9%, but assessed value growth during this same period has averaged 4.5%. To maintain a balanced budget during this time (FY 2015-16 to FY 2020-21), the County has used levy reserves.
- Domestic violence and child abuse caseloads -- In 2019, 985 domestic violence cases were filed, a 36% increase in caseload when compared to the previous year. In 2019, 624 child abuse cases were filed, representing a 33% increase in the child abuse caseload over the last four years. As these cases move through the criminal justice system, they result in the additional probation/parole supervision, additional beds in the Jail, additional beds in the Community Corrections Center and so forth.
- Increased community access to emergency shelter -- Although the overall number of people experiencing homelessness has been decreasing according to Washington County’s annual point-in-time count over the last several years (measured at 950 in the year 2010 as opposed to 530 in 2019), those seeking temporary shelter – as opposed to those residing in camps, on the street or other areas outdoors – have increased 70% over the last three years (from 175 in 2017 to 298 in 2019).

**Q: Why do proposed local option property tax measures appear on the ballot each election?**

A: Since Oregon voters approved Measure 50 in 1997, local governments and special districts in Oregon are prohibited from asking voters for increases in permanent property tax rates. In place of a permanent tax, local governments may ask voters to consider raising additional revenues through a “local option levy.” If voters approve local option levies, funds can be used for general purposes, such as public safety or library services. If approved, the levies are temporary and can be requested for a maximum of five years at a time.

**Q: If the Public Safety Levy is approved by voters, when would a property owner make the first payment? What about the last one?**

A: If it is approved, taxpayers would see the Public Safety Levy on their property tax statement beginning in October 2021. The last payment would be on their property tax statement in October 2025.

**Q: What happens to the current levy if the proposed levy is approved by voters?**

A: The current five-year levy expires in June 2021, whether or not the proposed levy is approved.

<b>If the Levy Does not Pass</b>
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**Q: If the Public Safety Levy does not pass, what would happen to countywide public safety services?**

A: The expiring levy has funded 16% of the County public safety system, which includes:

- Prosecution (attorneys and other personnel who represent the government when adjudicating criminal matters in state circuit court),
- Jail (a 572-bed, secured facility providing incarceration services to every policing agency in Washington County),
- Probation and parole (supervisory services to monitor offenders for compliance with court-ordered conditions for their release into the community instead of incarceration),
- Juvenile crime prevention (services to supervise youth offenders and aide their families and the victims of their offences with counseling, mediation, and other services as appropriate for each youth's situation),
- Special law enforcement teams (comprised of law enforcement officers and other personnel from city agencies and the County Sheriff's Office including the countywide Major Crimes Team, Crash Analysis Team, Tactical Negotiations Team, Mental Health Response Team and others),
- Other law enforcement services (such as forensics and investigations), and
- Victims' assistance and emergency shelter (including temporary shelter for women and children who are victims of domestic violence).

If the proposed levy does not pass, the local option property taxes proposed in the measure of \$0.47 per \$1,000 of assessed value would not be levied and reductions affecting prosecution, law enforcement, supervision, corrections and emergency shelters would likely begin in 2021. Also in 2021, typical homeowners, based on an average assessed value of \$300,000, would see a \$126 reduction in their property taxes per year.

## Miscellaneous

**Q: Where can I find more information about the Proposed Public Safety Levy?**

A: Learn more about it at: [www.co.washington.or.us/levies](http://www.co.washington.or.us/levies)

**Q: Does the County have any other levies on the ballot?**

A: Yes. Washington County Cooperative Library Services (WCCLS) has a renewal levy on the ballot in May 2020. Learn more about that levy at: [www.wccls.org/levy](http://www.wccls.org/levy)

*This information, except for the website link(s), was reviewed by the Oregon Secretary of State's Office for compliance with ORS 260.432.*