

Talking Points

Proposed Measure 34-296: Public Safety Levy

Thank you for your interest in the proposed 2020 Public Safety Levy. My name is _____ and I work in the _____ department/organization. I'm here to provide non-advocacy information today about the proposed public safety levy.

Washington County voters will be asked to consider two, five-year local option levies on the ballot this May: a renewal of the Library Levy and a replacement of the Public Safety Levy. Measure 34-296 would replace the five-year Public Safety Levy that is expiring in June 2021.

Summary

Washington County provides public safety services to all city and urban unincorporated neighborhoods and rural communities in Washington County, including prosecution, jail and other incarceration services, probation and parole supervision, juvenile crime prevention, special law enforcement teams and other law enforcement services, such as forensics and investigations.

The expiring levy has funded 16% of the public safety services just named.

If passed, the proposed levy would run from July 2021 to June 2026. The proposed levy would provide funding under two categories:

- Funding to continue the current level of services based on population growth (projected to be 1.75% over the five years of the proposed levy), inflation, equipment costs and other expenses associated with forecasted growth within the Washington County community. This category of the proposed levy would provide \$187.7 million to fund 168.5 Washington County positions and nonprofit emergency shelter providers over five years. Specifics about these proposed positions and services are listed below this summary under the heading of "Current Service Level Funding If the Proposed Levy Passes;" and
- Funding to address increases in caseloads beyond population growth projections (1.75% anticipated over the five years of the proposed levy), specially domestic violence, child abuse and emergency shelter caseloads. This category of the proposed levy would provide \$9.8 million in funds, and would add 11 more positions and other services over five years. Specifics about these proposed positions and services, that would be added above current service levels if the proposed levy passes, are also listed below under the heading "Added Services If the Proposed Levy Passes."

Taking these two funding categories together, the levy would, if passed, provide a total of \$197.5 million and fund 177.5 County positions over five years. If passed, the proposed levy would fund 16% of the County's public safety services, the same percentage as funded under the expiring levy.

Current Service Level If the Proposed Levy Passes

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.

Added Services If the Proposed Levy Passes

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 replacement 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)

Proposed Rate and Tax Impact – If the Levy Passes:

- The proposed levy would have a five-year, fixed rate of \$0.47 per \$1,000 of assessed value. This would be an increase of \$0.05 per \$1,000 of assessed value over the current levy.
- If approved, this would be the first increase in the rate since the original levy in the year 2000.

- In 2021, typical homeowners, based on an average assessed value of \$300,000, would pay \$141 per year, or about \$20 more than they paid in 2020.
- This assumes an average assessed value (not market value) of \$300,000.
- The tax due in future years would depend on changes in assessed value.

Rate and Tax Impact – If the Levy Does Not Pass:

- If the levy does not pass, the additional 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 per year reduction in their property taxes.
- If the levy does not pass, there would be a reduction in services in Washington County affecting prosecution, law enforcement, supervision, corrections and emergency shelters likely to begin in 2021.

More information

- More information on the proposed Public Safety Replacement Levy and the countywide Library Renewal Levy, is available at the County's Web site at: www.co.washington.or.us/levies.
- I'd be happy to answer any questions I can.