



HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 4208

PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

Vote cast by the 1997 Legislature on final passage:

Senate: Yeas, 40; Nays, 9.

House: Yeas, 94; Nays, 3; Excused, 1.

Official Ballot Title:

Shall the Constitution be amended to permit voter-approved school district levies to run for an optional four-year period, rather than the current two-year maximum?

Note: The ballot title and explanatory statement were written by the Attorney General as required by law. The complete text of House Joint Resolution 4208 begins on page 43.

Statement For

FOUR REASONS TO VOTE YES ON HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 4208

1. Expands local control

A YES vote would give local school districts the *option* of offering levies from one to four years. Voters in each school district have the final say. HJR 4208 does not change the 60% voter approval requirement.

2. Saves millions of taxpayer dollars that should be used in the classroom

Elections are expensive. School districts must pay for the cost of levy elections with public funds. Allowing school levies to be extended up to four years would save school districts millions of dollars statewide — money that should be redirected into the classroom.

3. Provides stability for schools, students and taxpayers

A four year levy option would provide greater stability for school districts to plan for a longer period of time. Removal of uncertainty caused by two-year election cycles would provide more efficient use of taxpayer money and allow continued support for students in the classroom.

4. Ensures planning into the 21st century

When the levy law was written into the constitution, there were fewer students and school budgeting was simple. Local parents could come together and in a few months create a new fully operating school. Today, there are almost one million students and school budgets and planning are extremely complex. School districts require better planning to meet educational needs. The two-year limit restricts planning and may sell some students short. Extending the levy option ensures that school districts can make optimum use of taxpayer money through better planning into the 21st century.

For more information, call (253) 520-9142.

Rebuttal of Statement Against

Voting "yes" gives you expanded options to increase local control and flexibility. Voting "no" means more frequent elections and increased election costs for taxpayers. Frequent elections do not result in more control or accountability. Frequent elections simply mean more elections. Voting "yes" allows you the final say for better long-range educational planning, stability, accountability and efficiency for your schools. And it saves money too!

Vote "yes" for our children's future! Vote for HJR 4208!

Voters Pamphlet Statement Prepared by:

MIKE WENSMAN, State Representative; BILL FINKBEINER, State Senator; JOHN STANFORD, Superintendent of Seattle Public Schools.

Advisory Committee: GARY LOCKE, Governor; RALPH MUNRO, Secretary of State; RICHARD SONSTELIE, President & Chief Executive Officer, Puget Sound Energy; JOHN WARNER, Senior Vice President, The Boeing Company; CAROL MOHLER, President, Washington State PTA.

The law as it now exists:

The Constitution generally limits property tax levies to a total of one percent of the true and fair value of property, considering the levies and all local taxing districts combined. One exception to this limit involves school district taxes. A school district may submit a proposition to the voters requesting authorization to exceed the one percent limit for school purposes. If the voters approve the proposition, the district can levy additional taxes for up to two years at a time without going back to the voters. Approval of these propositions requires that three-fifths of the votes cast be in favor of the proposition, and that the total number voting equal at least 40 percent of the number of votes cast in the last general election.

The effect of Constitutional Amendment 4208, if approved into law:

This measure would permit school districts to submit a proposition to the voters permitting a levy of additional taxes for up to four years at a time. Approval would require a "yes" vote from three-fifths of those voting, and the total number voting must be equal to 40 percent of the number of voters voting in the last preceding general election.

The proposed measure would also make a number of changes in the property tax article of the Constitution to remove obsolete words and phrases or to clarify grammar.

Statement Against

HJR 4208 MEANS LESS CONTROL OVER EDUCATION.

HJR 4208 would amend the Washington State Constitution to extend school levies. If it passes, you will vote on school funding packages every four years instead of every other year. This will significantly lessen your school district's accountability to you, the people who are paying the bills.

FREQUENT ELECTIONS PROVIDE ACCOUNTABILITY.

The State Constitution should not be amended to diminish your input and authority over how your money is spent. With property taxes doubling every eight to nine years, constant taxpayer oversight is essential for efficiency and accountability.

HJR 4208 DECREASES LOCAL CONTROL.

Research tells us that parental involvement in a child's education is the most important indicator of academic success. Yet parents have less input than ever, since the 1993 education reform bill gave an unelected commission exclusive power to restructure our schools. What we need is *more* input from you, the voters, taxpayers and parents, *not less*. With this in mind, do you believe HJR 4208 — *changing the state constitution to give you fewer occasions to vote on school issues* — will improve education and make your school district more accountable to *you*? No way.

A NO VOTE KEEPS YOU IN THE LOOP.

Vote to maintain your control over local schools. Your money is far less important to Washington students than your involvement as a parent and taxpayer. Remember, it's *your* money, *your* schools, *your* children. Vote NO on HJR 4208.

For more information, call (509) 765-8164.

Rebuttal of Statement For

HJR 4208 *cannot* "expand local control." Just the opposite. It will shelter districts from taxpayers. Levies are important, but local control is essential. *Your vote is the essence of local control.*

Excess levies were never intended to be a *guaranteed* source of revenue. By definition, they are *excess* levies.

The cost of voting is exaggerated. For a **\$20 MILLION** levy, a typical district might spend \$80,000 on the election. Relatively small price for local control.

Voters Pamphlet Statement Prepared by:

HAROLD HOCHSTATTER, State Senator; VAL STEVENS, State Senator; MARC BOLDT, State Representative.

Advisory Committee: ANN MURPHY, member, Federal Way School Board; LYNN HARSH; SARAH CASADA, Pierce County Councilwoman, former State Representative; PAUL O. SNYDER, President, Citizen Taxpayer Association; DAN EB, Executive Director, Washington Taxpayers Party.



**COMPLETE TEXT OF
Referendum Bill 47**
(continued)

NEW SECTION. Sec. 502. If any provision of this act or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the act or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 503. Part headings used in this act are not any part of the law.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 504. Except for section 401 of this act, the secretary of state shall submit this act to the people for their adoption and ratification, or rejection, at the next general election to be held in this state, in accordance with Article II, section 1 of the state Constitution and the laws adopted to facilitate its operation.

The following section of Chapter 3, Laws of 1997, was not referred to the voters by the Legislature as part of Referendum 47. It has been included here so that voters will be aware of which provision of Chapter 3, Laws of 1997, have or will become effective, independent of the vote on the Referendum Bill.

**PART IV
REPEAL OF PERMANENT STATE LEVY REDUCTION
UNDER ENGROSSED HOUSE BILL NO. 1417**

NEW SECTION. Sec. 401. The following acts or parts of acts are each repealed:

- (1) RCW 84.55.--- and 1997 c 2 s 2; and
- (2) 1997 c 2 s 5 (uncodified).



**COMPLETE TEXT OF
House Joint Resolution 4208**

BE IT RESOLVED, BY THE SENATE AND HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON, IN LEGISLATIVE SESSION ASSEMBLED:

THAT, At the next general election to be held in this state the secretary of state shall submit to the qualified voters of the state for their approval and ratification, or rejection, an amendment to Article VII, section 2 of the Constitution of the state of Washington to read as follows:

Article VII, section 2. Except as hereinafter provided and notwithstanding any other provision of this Constitution, the aggregate of all tax levies upon real and personal property by the state and all taxing districts now existing or hereafter created, shall not in any year exceed one (~~(per centum)~~ percent) of the true and fair value of such property in money: *Provided, however,* That nothing herein shall prevent levies at the rates now provided by law by or for any port or public utility district. The term "taxing district" for the purposes of this section shall mean any political subdivision, municipal corporation, district, or other governmental agency authorized by law to levy, or have levied for it, ad valorem taxes on property, other than a port or public utility district. Such aggregate

limitation or any specific limitation imposed by law in conformity therewith may be exceeded only as follows:

(a) By any taxing district when specifically authorized so to do by a majority of at least three-fifths of the (~~(electors thereof)~~ voters of the taxing district) voting on the proposition to levy such additional tax submitted not more than twelve months prior to the date on which the proposed levy is to be made and not oftener than twice in such twelve month period, either at a special election or at the regular election of such taxing district, at which election the number of (~~(persons)~~ voters) voting "yes" on the proposition shall constitute three-fifths of a number equal to forty (~~(per centum)~~ percent) of the total (~~(votes cast)~~ number of voters voting) in such taxing district at the last preceding general election when the number of (~~(electors)~~ voters) voting on the proposition does not exceed forty (~~(per centum)~~ percent) of the total (~~(votes cast)~~ number of voters voting) in such taxing district in the last preceding general election; or by a majority of at least three-fifths of the (~~(electors thereof)~~ voters of the taxing district) voting on the proposition to levy when the number of (~~(electors)~~ voters) voting on the proposition exceeds forty (~~(per centum)~~ percent) of the (~~(total votes cast)~~ number of voters voting) in such taxing district in the last preceding general election: *Provided,* That notwithstanding any other provision of this Constitution, any proposition pursuant to this subsection to levy additional tax for the support of the common schools may provide such support for a (~~(two year)~~ period of up to four years) and any proposition to levy an additional tax to support the construction, modernization, or remodelling of school facilities may provide such support for a period not exceeding six years;

(b) By any taxing district otherwise authorized by law to issue general obligation bonds for capital purposes, for the sole purpose of making the required payments of principal and interest on general obligation bonds issued solely for capital purposes, other than the replacement of equipment, when authorized so to do by majority of at least three-fifths of the (~~(electors thereof)~~ voters of the taxing district) voting on the proposition to issue such bonds and to pay the principal and interest thereon by (~~(an)~~ annual tax (levy) levies) in excess of the limitation herein provided during the term of such bonds, submitted not oftener than twice in any calendar year, at an election held in the manner provided by law for bond elections in such taxing district, at which election the total number of (~~(persons)~~ voters) voting on the proposition shall constitute not less than forty (~~(per centum)~~ percent) of the total number of (~~(votes cast)~~ voters voting) in such taxing district at the last preceding general election: *Provided,* That any such taxing district shall have the right by vote of its governing body to refund any general obligation bonds of said district issued for capital purposes only, and to provide for the interest thereon and amortization thereof by annual levies in excess of the tax limitation provided for herein, *And provided further,* That the provisions of this section shall also be subject to the limitations contained in Article VIII, Section 6, of this Constitution;

(c) By the state or any taxing district (~~(for the purpose of paying the principal or interest on general obligation bonds outstanding on December 6, 1934; or)~~ for the purpose of preventing the impairment of the obligation of a contract when ordered so to do by a court of last resort.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That the secretary of state shall cause notice of this constitutional amendment to be published at least four times during the four weeks next preceding the election in every legal newspaper in the state.