

DEFINITIONS OF BALLOT AND ELECTION TERMINOLOGY

(as of June 2013)

MILL

The property tax is measured in mills; a mill is one tenth of a penny. A mill produces \$1 in tax revenue for every \$1,000 of taxable value of the property. The taxable value is 35% of the fair market value, which is determined by the County Auditor's Office.

RENEWAL LEVY

A renewal levy is the CONTINUANCE OF AN EXISTING LEVY with the collection rate at the same dollar amount as when the levy was originally approved. (Reference: Office of the Ohio Secretary of State)

REPLACEMENT LEVY

A replacement levy is a NEW LEVY FOR THE SAME PURPOSE AS THE EXISTING LEVY but with a different collection rate than the levy it replaces. The collection rate uses the assessed value of the property at the time of the replacement.

EMERGENCY TAX LEVY

An emergency tax levy allows a SCHOOL system to receive a specific dollar amount that will not change with property evaluations during the term of the levy. Once a school levy has been designated an Emergency Tax Levy, it must retain that earmark.

BOND ISSUE

A bond issue is when a state government, or a local unit of government (city, county, school district) places a question before the voters, asking them to approve or deny additional proposed spending. Bond issues are customarily used to borrow money in order to finance major capital projects and repay it over an extended period of time. School districts and municipalities often make use of the bond election authority to pay for school construction or community facilities.

State legislatures or local units of government may also place such a question before the voters in their political jurisdiction because of laws that prevent the unit of government from raising taxes or spending beyond a certain level without the approval of voters.

REFERENDUM

A referendum is the right reserved by the Ohio Constitution for Ohioans to vote to ADOPT or REJECT LAWS PASSED BY THE LEGISLATURE.

Procedure: A referendum on a law already passed by the legislature may be requested by petition within 90 days after the law has been filed with the Secretary of State. It may not be requested on an emergency law, tax levy or appropriations for current expenses. Signatures of 6% of the electors voting in the last gubernatorial election are required on the petition and must be obtained in at least 44 of the 88 counties. The law is submitted to the voters at the next general election 60 days after the petition is filed and cannot become effective unless approved by a majority of the voters. (Reference: LWVO Education Fund. *Know Your Government, 9th Edition*. pg. 142. 2004)

ZONING REFERENDUM

A zoning referendum is only used by citizens of a township to override their trustees' vote. Signatures by petition, equal to 8% of the vote cast in the last gubernatorial election, must be collected for a zoning referendum to be placed on the ballot.

INITIATIVE

An initiative is the right reserved by the Ohio Constitution for Ohioans to PROPOSE LEGISLATION OR AMENDMENTS TO THE STATE CONSTITUTION.

1. **Constitutional Amendments** may be initiated directly by the people, bypassing the legislature.

Procedure: A summary of the proposed amendment must be certified by the Ohio Attorney General. The full text of the amendment and the summary are then filed with the Secretary of State. The citizens who initiated the amendment must circulate petitions to collect enough signatures to equal 10% of the electors voting for governor in the last gubernatorial

election. Signatures must come from at least half of Ohio's 88 counties and represent 5% of the total vote cast for governor in that county in the last gubernatorial election. Signatures must be received by the Secretary of State no later than 90 days prior to the general election so that the Secretary of State, with the assistance of the local Boards of Elections, can verify the validity of the signatures. The ballot wording, prepared by the Ohio Ballot Board, along with arguments for the amendment prepared by the initiating committee and arguments against it by persons named by the legislature, is published once a week for three weeks in a newspaper or general circulation in each county. If a majority of the voters approve the amendment it becomes part of the constitution.

2. **Laws** are initiated indirectly by the people since the petition must be submitted to the legislature first.

Procedure: Signatures of 3% of the electors voting in the last gubernatorial election are required to introduce the proposed law in the legislature. If the legislature does not pass the law in four months, or if an amended version is passed, the petitioners have 90 days to collect signatures of an additional 3% of the electors and place it on the ballot. Signatures must be obtained from half of the 88 counties. The law is voted on at the next general election 90 days after the petition is filed and becomes effective if approved by the voters. It is not subject to the Governor's veto. (Reference: LWVO Education Fund. *Know Your Government, 9th Edition*. pg. 142. 2004)

ELECTRIC/GAS AGGREGATION

Aggregation is the process in which energy is sold to consumers who have joined together as a group to buy a product, electric or natural gas. Local governments may aggregate the energy used by their residents and arrange for the purchase of electricity or natural gas as "governmental aggregators." Ohio law gives local governments the option to choose either an opt-in or opt-out form of aggregation. The "Opt-in" form requires that each consumer agrees to participate in the program before being included in the aggregation pool. It does not require voter approval at an election. The "Opt-out" form automatically includes each consumer in the aggregated pool unless the individual affirmatively decides not to participate. It requires approval by a majority of the voters at an election.

Gas aggregation issues typically read: "Shall the (name of local government) have the authority to aggregate the retail natural gas loads located in the (name of local government), and enter into service agreements to facilitate for those loads the sale and purchase of natural gas, such aggregation to occur automatically except where any person elects to opt out?"

HAMILTON COUNTY TAX LEVY REVIEW COMMITTEE

The County-appointed, 9-member Tax Levy Review Committee (TLRC) serves in an advisory capacity to the Hamilton County Commissioners. Prior to the placement of each levy on the ballot, the TLRC hears agency requests for funding, engages a consultant to review agency financial and spending practices and considers the mid-term review of agency budget targets and contractual requirements. After studying all the information gathered, the committee works to balance the public need for services with the ability of Hamilton County citizens to bear the tax burden to fund these services. At the completion of their review, the TLRC sends a written report of findings and recommendations to the Board of County Commissioners. The Commissioners make the final decision regarding the levy that is placed before the voters.

BALLOT ABBREVIATIONS

ADD=Addition; COE=Current Operating Expenses; CPT=Continuing Period of Time; REN=Renewal