

## Proposition No. 1

### Regular Property Tax Levy Lid Lift for Fire Protection & Emergency Medical Services

#### Official Ballot Title

The Board of Commissioners of South Kitsap Fire and Rescue adopted Resolution No. 2023-02 proposing an increase in the fire district's regular property tax levy. To fund fire protection and emergency medical services for six years, this proposition authorizes restoring the previous maximum levy rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000.00 of assessed valuation for collection in 2024 and sets the limit factor for each subsequent year at 100% plus the annual percentage change in the Consumer Price Index (see the Resolution), or 101%, whichever is greater. The final year's levy dollar amount would be used to compute limitations for subsequent levies.

Should this proposition be approved?

- Yes**
- No**

## Explanatory Statement

*(Prepared by the attorney for the district as prescribed by law.)*

South Kitsap Fire and Rescue provides emergency medical, rescue and fire protection services to its citizens. This proposition authorizes the District to restore its property tax fire levy rate (which is currently approximately \$1.09 per \$1,000.00 of assessed valuation) to the maximum fire levy rate of \$1.50 per \$1,000.00 of assessed valuation and will establish a limit factor for the following five years that shall be 100% of the first-half to first-half Consumer Price Index for the Seattle-Tacoma-Bremerton area. This results in an approximate \$0.41 increase with an impact of approximately \$17.08 increase-per-month on a median assessed valued home (\$500,000.00) within the District in 2023.

The District's Board of Commissioners has determined that this proposition is necessary to ensure effective level of services, firefighter staffing, equipment and facilities amidst a significant increase in call volume within the District. Approval of this measure will permit the District to take essential actions that will improve the level of fire protection and emergency medical services provided to its citizens by adding, training and equipping additional career and volunteer firefighters, paramedics and emergency medical technicians.

## Argument For the Measure

Emergency services are vital for a growing community. As residents of the SKFR Fire District, this committee is in full support of restoring the levy to the previously approved amount of \$1.50 per \$1,000 of assessed value.

The fire levy is *not a new levy*. SKFR asks us to renew the fire levy every six years and was last renewed by the voters in 2017. The fire levy accounts for 60% of the district's overall budget. SKFR's call volume has increased 55% in the last 10 years. The fire district responded to nearly 13,000 calls in 2022 and projections show the district will respond to over 18,000 calls in the next six years. Staffing levels are not adequate for a fire district this size. With high call volumes and low staffing levels, the average response times have increased over one minute, and will continue to increase, if additional firefighters are not added to daily staffing. This levy will improve 911 response and reduce response times by hiring twenty-one additional firefighters, staff the Banner fire station with 24-hour personnel, and improve community and firefighter safety.

Due to restrictions placed upon annual growth of levies, the current rate has fallen to \$1.09 per \$1,000 of assessed value. The new levy would be approximately \$13.67 per month for the owner of a \$400,000 home.

Please join us in supporting our fire and emergency services by voting "Yes" for Proposition 1.

## Rebuttal to the Argument Against

Restoring the levy will add new firefighter EMT/Paramedic positions to SKFR's daily staffing. Without it, response times will only increase, daily staffing will be reduced from today's number, and we will all suffer as a result. SKFR receives mutual aid from other agencies, more often than they provide it, due to the combination of high call volume and low staffing. Other agencies are not required to, nor will they, subsidize our community forever.

*Argument prepared by Rob Sowell, Chairperson; committee for the measure. For more information, email [yesforskfd@outlook.com](mailto:yesforskfd@outlook.com)*

## Argument Against the Measure

Another year has gone by and the SKFR is back with their request for a \$1.50/\$1000 levy. Let's see what is new and if this plan is better than the last.

The SKFR again talks about reducing services if this is not approved. All police and fire districts have agreements with all fire districts on the Peninsula. So, someone will come; you won't be left to burn in your bed. Bremerton, Gig Harbor, are but a few who routinely assist the SKFR during their infrequent busy times. Have you experienced no one responding to your issue? SKFR says they provide "full service" for their EMS calls to include transportation to the hospital. Now the unit is out of service. Yet, we are told they don't have enough units. A self-induced issue?

The paper noted that the chief received a \$14K raise this year. We assume that the 2 assistant chiefs, 3 division chiefs, 4 battalion commanders, 7 Captains, and 21 Lieutenants received somewhat similar raises. How many does it take to supervise 59 paramedics and firefighters?

The SKFR purchased 6 vacant properties including a house in McCormick Woods for \$2.5M in cash. Coming soon is several more levies for new buildings, trucks, and more people.

No work was done on consolidating the 3 fire districts. So while we have one sheriff for Kitsap, we still have 3 fire districts with all the extra overhead to run each one that costs you about \$2.5M a year. Still a no vote needed.

## Rebuttal to the Argument For

Are you hearing sirens and seeing flashing lights at all times of the day? SKFR says they get 2 calls per hour. SKFR states the response time has increased one minute. The solution is 24 more firefighters to respond to the 2 calls per hour they get, spread among 11 existing stations with plans to add 5 more. Does spending millions on artificial response timing in a rural setting make sense? Wrong plan. Vote No.

*Argument prepared by Jeff Daily, Chairperson for South Kitsap Citizens Demanding Responsible Taxation, committee against the measure. For more information, email [skcdrt01@gmail.com](mailto:skcdrt01@gmail.com) or go to <http://southkitsapcitizensdemandingresponsibletaxation.one/index.html>.*