



**The County Sales Tax
is Money**



FOR OUR SCHOOLS

BACKGROUND

Memphis and Shelby County schools will merge in the 2013-2014 school year. The Transition Planning Commission has developed a merger plan that will help to position more students for academic and career success, but in order to build a world-class public school system in Shelby County, education funding must be increased. Effective August 2013, the city of Memphis will no longer be required to allocate funding for education, and once the school systems merge, Shelby County will become the single funding source. On August 27th, the Shelby County Board of Commissioners approved a resolution to increase the county sales tax by ½ cent to help close the gap, and to provide additional funding needed for education. Starting on October 17th, voters in the city of Memphis, and unincorporated Shelby County will have an opportunity to vote on the referendum to increase the county sales tax that will appear first on the November 6th ballot.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. How will the referendum appear on the voting ballot?

COUNTY SALES AND USE TAX REFERENDUM (Referendum No. 18A)

“Shall the resolution of the Board of County Commissioners, increasing the county sales tax from 2.25% to 2.75%, except where the sales tax rate is limited or modified by statute, be approved?”

2. How will the tax increase be used to support public schools?

If the referendum to increase the county sales tax by ½ cent passes with a majority vote, an estimated \$60 million in additional revenue will be generated.

*The state of Tennessee has mandated that one-half (1/2) of the proceeds shall be expended and distributed in the same manner as the county property tax for school purposes is expended and distributed. In short, 50% or approximately **\$30 million of the proceeds that the sales tax increase generates will be allocated to Shelby County schools.***

3. How will the \$30 million for education funding be spent?

Funds will be used by Shelby County Schools to support new investments in improving public schools, like expanding access to Pre-K to all students who qualify, and advancing efforts to improve teacher quality and effectiveness.

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4. What will the additional revenue from the county sales tax increase be used for?

Elected officials have indicated that additional proceeds from the county sales tax increase will support efforts to reduce crime, clean up blight, and to keep community/recreational centers and libraries open in the city of Memphis.

5. Why should I vote in favor of the county sales tax increase?

Education is the most important civil rights issue of our time. Current statistics on student achievement rates in both Memphis and Shelby County schools reflect an urgent need to ensure that all children have the resources and learning tools necessary to succeed. By expanding access to pre-K to the 2000 children who currently qualify for pre-K, but cannot enroll due to classroom and funding shortages, and ensuring that there is an effective teacher in every classroom, academic outcomes will improve. Revenue generated from the county sales tax increase will provide the funds that are needed to implement and sustain these initiatives in the unified district.

In addition to making sure all kids have the resources and tools needed to succeed in school, by voting YES for the county sales tax referendum, you can help to secure funding needed to keep our neighborhoods safe, vibrant, and clean. By doing so, we can make Memphis and Shelby County more attractive to potential residents and companies interested in relocating.

6. What will happen if the county sales tax referendum does not pass?

Leaders in city and county government have indicated that the potential for property taxes to increase by as much as .40 cents in both the city and the county is greater if a majority of voters in Memphis and unincorporated Shelby County do not vote to approve the county sales tax increase referendum. Additionally, because of the shortfall in the schools budget, it is very unlikely that funds will exist to support initiatives that are desperately needed for early childhood development and school readiness (Pre-K), and to improve academic outcomes by investing more in teacher effectiveness.

7. Who is currently supporting the county sales tax increase?

To date, Mayor A C Wharton, members of the Shelby County Commission, Memphis City Council, and the Shelby County Unified School Board have all expressed support for the ½ cent county sales tax referendum. Additionally, a diverse coalition of civic and community organizations and leaders have endorsed the referendum, including Stand for Children, Fight Crime Invest in Kids, the NAACP, Latino Memphis, the Shelby County Democratic Party, the Mid-South Peace & Justice Center, and others.

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