

Franklin County Children's Services Ballot Issue

Information from the League of Women Voters or Metropolitan Columbus Voter Information Bulletin <http://www.lwvcols.org/voting/vib.php>

Issue 4: To replace a 3.15 mill property tax with a 3.1 mill property tax to support Franklin County Children's Services

League of Women Voters Explanation

Franklin County Children Services (FCCS) is the agency mandated by law to protect and care for the county's abused, neglected, and dependent children; the agency also serves troubled youth.

About two-thirds of the agency's operations are funded by two property tax levies, a 3.15 mill levy and a 1.90 mill levy. The 3.15 mill levy expires at the end of this year, while the other levy expires in 2014. A replacement levy of 3.10 mills will appear on the November 3 ballot. FCCS intends to propose an increase in its other levy in 2014, from 1.90 to 2.50. If successful, the two levies together will account for roughly 72 percent of total projected revenue for FCCS over the next decade.

The levy being replaced this year currently collects \$69 million in annual revenue for the agency.

If passed, the 3.10 mill replacement-with-reduction levy will collect \$93.5 million in annual revenue. Currently, the owner of a \$100,000 market value home in Franklin County pays \$116.99 a year in property taxes to support FCCS. Passage of a 3.10 mill replacement-with reduction levy will increase this tax by \$28.48 a year to \$145.47 beginning in 2010. The increase results from the fact that, by state law, the current levy is being collected at a rate lower than 3.15 mills – 2.17 mills, called the *effective rate* – so that total revenue does not exceed that collected when the levy was first passed 10 years ago.

The agency's expenditures in 2008 totaled \$167 million. The biggest single category of expenditures, amounting to almost 70 percent of the budget, is payments to contracted service providers with which the agency partners to provide foster, residential, and managed care services to families and children. Personnel costs for the agency's 740 staff members account for just under 30 percent of the budget.

Arguments Made in Support of Issue 4

- Franklin County Children Services depends heavily on this levy. If it is not replaced, the agency will lose \$69 million in revenue – almost half its budget.
- Given recent state funding cuts to social service organizations caused by the economic downturn – more than \$1 million – Children Services relies even more on local property taxes to fulfill its mission to protect children.
- The agency is accredited by the Council on Accreditation of Services for Families and Children, one of only a few county children services boards in Ohio and the nation to meet the rigorous national standards regarding quality of services and sound management practice and to be so accredited.

See proponent organization: Committee4Children

<http://www.committee4children.com/index.html>

See also 44-page levy book prepared by Franklin County Children Services:

http://www.co.franklin.oh.us/Children_Services/assets/pdf/Levy%20Book.pdf

Arguments Made in Opposition to Issue 4

- Revenue from this levy will jump significantly, from just under \$70 million annually to more than \$93 million, even though the agency anticipates a decline in service demand over the next decade.
- The agency took 10 years – from 1999 to 2008 – to respond to a recommendation to hold contract service providers more accountable for their work and the funds they expend.
- While the “replacement levy with reduction” appears to lower the millage rate, the decrease is only from 3.15 to 3.10, and in fact, homeowners will actually pay more because the current levy is being collected at the effective rate of only 2.17 mills; moreover, the agency intends to propose an increase in its other levy in 2014, from 1.90 to 2.50.

(No opposition campaign.)