

ALACHUA COUNTY QUESTION 2

Shall the School Board of Alachua County levy a half-cent sales tax to finance safety and security improvements: repair, renovation, and remodeling of Board-owned schools, including modernization of classrooms, science labs and other spaces; technology; elimination of portable classrooms; new construction; land acquisition and improvement; and other school facilities projects; with oversight by an independent citizens' committee? The tax would begin January 1, 2019, and last twelve years.

Many Alachua County public schools are severely overcrowded and have multiple serious maintenance issues. Over the past decade, the state legislature has cut funding for school infrastructure in the Alachua County School District by \$168 million, substantially reducing the funds available for facility repair and replacement of roofs, air conditioning systems, and worn and outdated equipment. Funding is also lacking for modernization of facilities such as science laboratories, safety and security improvements, and construction to accommodate a student population which has grown by more than 2,300 students in the past year. Currently, over 6,000 students take classes in expensive portable buildings.

If you vote YES

- Approximately \$20 million will be raised annually to provide additional funds for school facilities needs.
- The Alachua County sales tax will go up half a penny, which will cost the average family \$58 per year. Up to 1/3 of the tax will be paid by outside visitors.
- According to Standard & Poor's, passage of the referendum will generate over 400 jobs and more than \$30 million in economic development every year.
- A citizens advisory committee appointed by the School Board will monitor and advise the School Board on the expenditure of the surtax proceeds.
- Funds will be available for maintenance and repairs of County public schools and the children attending them will benefit from updates and improvements in school facilities.

If you vote NO

- The combined sales tax rate for Alachua County will remain at 6.5%, which is below the average combined rate in Florida.
- The School Board will need to make difficult choices as to where to spend the limited funds they have been receiving from the state.
- The quality of education children receive in Alachua County Schools will be compromised due to the inability to make needed facilities' improvements and repairs.

Supporters of this referendum include the Gainesville Chamber of Commerce, Citizens for Strong Schools, the Alachua County Council of PTAs, and the League of Women Voters of Alachua County.