



# Vote March 16

In a special election on Tuesday, **March 16, 2010**, Sarasota County voters will be asked to maintain the current voted millage rate for public schools. The facts below are presented to help voters make an informed decision.

- Approving the referendum **will not raise property taxes**. It is not a new tax. It is a continuation of a millage already in effect. It was originally approved in 2002 and renewed in 2006. It must be approved again every four years.
- Sarasota is an “A” school district with continuously improving FCAT and SAT scores that are well above state and national averages. The district **graduation rate is more than 85 percent** and its **dropout rate is below 2 percent**.
- Referendum funding has enabled the district to **recruit and retain highly qualified teachers**, provide a longer school day, hire more counselors, maintain award-winning arts programs and enhance other services to help **improve student achievement**.
- The cost of the referendum to the average homeowner is about 39 cents a day. **Even with the voted millage included, homeowners in 54 of Florida’s 67 counties pay a higher school millage rate than we do in Sarasota County.**

## Absentee ballots and early voting

Any registered voter may request an **absentee ballot** from the **Supervisor of Elections Office**. Completed ballots must be returned to the Elections Office by 7 p.m., Tuesday, March 16.  
Phone: **941-861-8600**  
Web site: **www.SRQelections.com**

**Early voting will be offered from March 1-14** at the Supervisor of Elections offices in Sarasota, Venice and North Port.  
Hours are 8:30 a.m.-4 p.m. weekdays, 9 a.m.-1 p.m. Saturdays and 1-5 p.m. Sundays.

## School Referendum Information



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- The district has **improved efficiency** in custodial services, transportation, energy consumption and many other areas to cut costs without cutting services to students.
- Over the past two years the district has been forced to **reduce its annual operating budget by more than \$70 million** and **eliminate 500 instructional, support and administrative staff positions**.
- Referendum revenue has been a buffer against even deeper cuts. If the millage is renewed, the district will still face budget cuts next year because of reduced property values in the county and continuing shortfalls in state revenue. **If the millage is not renewed, the district will lose a projected \$38 million next year *in addition* to whatever other cuts are required.**
- **80 percent of the district budget is paid to the district's 5,000 employees.** The majority of that money is used by families to buy goods and services from local businesses.

**Please vote in this  
important election!**