

THE PLAIN DEALER

School districts in Northeast Ohio ask for tax hikes on Tuesday

Thursday, May 06, 2013

By Edith Starzyk

CLEVELAND, Ohio -- More than a dozen Northeast Ohio school districts are asking taxpayers for more money in Tuesday's primary election. Many of them say they need the increase because they've gotten less money from the state over the past two years.

The [Brooklyn district](#), for instance, is getting \$1.3 million less in business and utility tax reimbursements from the state this year, and local tax revenue also has dropped. [Lakewood schools](#) have lost more than \$6 million in state funds over the past two years.

"We passed a 6.9-mill levy in 2010, but that was pretty much wiped out by the cut in funding, along with property devaluations and tax delinquencies," spokeswoman Christine Gordillo.

To balance its budget two years ago, the state cut how much it reimbursed districts for business taxes that used to flow to them but now go directly to the state. Some districts also lost reimbursement money for utility taxes.

Rob Nichols, spokesman for Gov. John Kasich, said the data he has seen indicates the number of levy requests over the past two years is the lowest over the past decade.

"The concept that we're starving districts and forcing them to go to the ballot just doesn't hold water," he said.

But Dale Butland, spokesman for [Innovation Ohio](#), said Nichols' numbers include tax renewals and bond issues for construction. His liberal-leaning think tank, based in Columbus, says the number of requests for additional operating money has soared since Kasich took office.

"Districts have done everything they can to cope with these cuts," Butland said. "They've cut teachers, increased the participation fees for sports, gotten rid of certain academic programs, laid teachers off, increased their health contributions, consolidated services. They did everything they can, but they're still short."

Other local districts asking for property tax hikes Tuesday are Avon Lake, Barberton, Black River, Cloverleaf, Columbia, Coventry, Cuyahoga Falls, Kent, Ledgemont Mogodore and Westlake.

In addition to the requests for new money, tax renewals are being sought in Amherst, Brecksville-Broadview Heights, Kirtland, Manchester, Mentor, North Ridgeville, Painesville and Willoughby-Eastlake.

The Medina district took its request for new operating money off the ballot because of a controversy over the contract of Superintendent Randy Stepp.

Voters in some communities will find other ballot issues, including proposals to change zoning, increase municipal income tax rates, and approve taxes for libraries, emergency medical services and police.

Polls are open from 6:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Original Article:

http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2013/05/school_districts_in_northeast.html