

School levies the big decision for many Ohio voters



Ohio voters today will decide on 72 new operating levies asking for a total of \$260 million in additional taxes. Photo: school levy sign.

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COLUMBUS, Ohio – School districts across Ohio are crossing their fingers as voters head to the polls this Election Day.

There are 194 school levies on the ballot, 72 of which are new operating levies.

Dale Butland, communications manager of the public policy advocacy group Innovation Ohio, says many districts still are struggling to recover from state funding cuts enacted in 2011, which shifted the burden to taxpayers.

"Schools have cut back on the number of classes given," he explains. "They have increased sports participation fees, they have laid off teachers in many cases and they've asked teachers and other school personal to pay more for their health insurance. They really cut expenses every place they could."

Butland adds Innovation Ohio's [research](#) found a 27 percent increase in requests for new money levies for school operations since Gov. John Kasich's first budget passed in 2011, which cut funding for education by \$1.8 billion over the previous two-year period.

The governor's office has not commented on the report.

In the November 2012 election, voters turned down the majority of new levy requests.

Butland says most Ohioans simply cannot afford to carry the costs of funding schools.

"There are lots of people who don't wish our children ill," he says. "They would love to provide kids with more money. But particularly older people living on incomes that are fixed, oftentimes

they feel that they just can't afford more property taxes."

While the state budget passed this summer included increases in overall school funding and the governor's schools plan includes a \$250 million fund to reward education innovation with grants, Butland says three out of four Ohio school districts have less state revenue than they did three years ago.

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