

# Washington State PTA

## Simple Majority Campaign – Yes on EHJR 4204



### Initiative Pro/Con Arguments

#### **Current Situation**

One in seven school levies failed last year. Of the 33 failed levies in 2006, all but one of those levies would have passed if the standard was a simple majority.

Our public schools are facing a funding crisis. We rank 46<sup>th</sup> in the nation in class size, and 42<sup>nd</sup> in overall school spending.

School districts are dependent on passing levies to fund the operations, technology, and buses for their school districts. To pass a school levy ballot issue the community must support the levies with a 60% YES vote, called a “supermajority.”

For years, the Washington State PTA along with other education associations has lobbied the state government to change the “supermajority” to a “simple majority,” as well as to remove the validation requirement. A simple majority would allow levies to be passed with a 50% vote.

**This November 6<sup>th</sup> the entire state has the opportunity to change the constitution to allow school districts to pass levies with a 50% simple majority.**

#### **Simple Majority Supporters Argue...**

- Local levies support basic needs: up-to-date textbooks, smaller class sizes, building maintenance and repair, classroom computers. These things are critical to ensuring our kids get a good education.
- We need to make it easier to invest in our public schools, not harder.
- When a local levy fails—even with 59% of the vote—it results in deep budget cuts, teacher layoffs and other disruptions that hurt our kids and can take years to fix.
- Most levies eventually pass, sometimes on the second or third try. But this means that school districts waste a great deal of time and taxpayer money holding multiple elections to accomplish what a majority of the voters supported.
- The PTA has lobbied in support of this issue for years. We need to follow through by moving from lobbying our legislators to lobbying our communities to support this issue.

#### **Simple Majority Opponents Argue...**

- Because simple majority doesn't change levy lids, this measure does not allow local voters to increase support for their schools even when the community wants to.
- In other communities, the fear is that simple majority would result in a modest tax increase.
- People might believe that this “fixes” education funding, when in fact it is simply an improved funding mechanism.
- Takes some of the burden of education funding away from the state where it belongs.
- The super-majority was initially established in the '30s and added to the Constitution in 1944. Mail-in ballots, reduction in number of school districts, and clarifying district boundaries, has changed original intent, although some people will disagree.