

Votes to Oppose Ballot Initiatives

Steps for Local PTAs and Councils

PTA has a long history of advocating for every child's education, health, safety, and mental and physical well-being. In Washington state, initiatives that affect these areas occasionally appear on the general election ballot. The Washington State PTA Board of Directors has voted to oppose several initiatives appearing on the November 2026 ballot. For information on WSPTA's positions opposing the initiatives, go [HERE](#). WSPTA encourages all local PTAs and councils to formally oppose these initiatives and educate their members. This resource contains the steps that local PTA and council leaders can take to formally oppose the ballot initiatives.

Step	Action Item(s)
Board of Directors Meeting	Council & Local PTA Board of Directors Discuss the initiatives at a board meeting, and determine a recommendation: • At a regularly scheduled board meeting or a special board meeting. • Include the topic of discussion in the meeting notice. • Discuss and determine the board's recommendation for each initiative separately. Present both pro and con points of view; use the WSPTA board positions and FAQs and online voter pamphlet statements available from the Secretary of State. • The board's recommendation can be to oppose or to remain neutral. The board may not recommend supporting any of the initiatives, as this would conflict with WSPTA's adopted positions and violate the Standards of Affiliation Agreement. • Best Practice if the board recommendation is to oppose: While the board of directors may take a stand on a ballot measure, they are accountable to the membership; it is best practice to have the decision on whether to oppose the initiatives made by the members. If the board's recommendation is to remain neutral, they do not need to schedule a membership vote. However, any member can propose a motion to support or oppose the initiatives at a membership meeting, and the board should be ready to share its recommendation during the discussion of the motion.
Schedule Membership Meeting	Council & Local PTA Board of Directors Schedule a membership meeting: • With proper legal notice as required by nonprofit law (at least 10 days' notice.) • Include the topic of discussion in the meeting notice.
Hold Membership Meeting	Councils delegates & Local PTA members For each initiative, discuss and determine the formal position: • Educate membership on contents and timing of initiatives. Present both pro and con points of view; use the WSPTA board positions and FAQs and online voter pamphlet statements available from the Secretary of State's website. • Your PTA may take two votes (one to oppose and one to use PTA resources in opposition) and can word the motions to fit your situation. • Motion to Oppose Steps: (1) Consider the motion to oppose (means the PTA opposes adoption of the initiative and recommends people vote NO) - (2) get a second - (3) have discussion - (4) vote - (5) record the vote in minutes. ○ Sample Motion to Oppose - "I move that the _____ PTA opposes <i>initiative (name and number)</i>."

	• Motion to Use PTA Resources Steps: (1) Consider motion (means the group wants to give time, money, and/or resources to oppose the initiative) – (2) get a second – (3) have discussion – (4) vote – (5) record the vote in minutes. ○ Motions to Use PTA Resources may or may not include a financial donation to a no campaign. ○ Sample Motions to Use PTA Resources: ▪ With Donation <u>with</u> an Existing Budget Line – “I move that _____ PTA supports the “<i>No campaign name</i>” and allocates funds to the “YYY” budget line in the amount of \$XXX.” OR “I move that _____ PTA supports the “No campaign name” and reallocates funds from the “XXX” budget line to the “YYY” budget line in the amount of \$XXX.” ▪ With Donation <u>without</u> an Existing Budget Line - “I move that _____ PTA supports the “<i>No campaign name</i>” and adds a budget line item called “<i>Ballot measure advocacy</i>” in the amount of \$XXX.” ▪ Without Financial Donation – “I move that _____ PTA supports the “<i>No campaign name</i>” with volunteer time.
Next Steps	MOTION PASSES: Councils • Inform all local PTAs in the council about the results of the motions. • Begin regular communication with local PTAs about opposing the initiatives: ○ FAQs and resources about ballot initiatives and votes to oppose ○ Content and timing of ballot initiatives • Communicate using all PTA methods (email, social media, meeting time, coffee chats, non-district websites and newsletters, etc.) • Important - When using school or district communication channels, you can only share factual information without attempting to persuade or influence. Local PTAs • Inform all PTA members about the results of the motions. • Share FAQs and resources about the ballot initiatives. • Share information about registering to vote. • Encourage members to vote no. • Communicate using all PTA methods (email, social media, meeting time, coffee chats, non-district websites and newsletters, etc.) • Important - When using school or district communication channels, you can only share factual information without attempting to persuade or influence. MOTION FAILS: Note: If a motion to oppose is not adopted, it means the PTA will remain neutral. • Let meeting attendees know they can get involved in the no campaign as individuals. • Share information with local PTAs or members about the ballot measure(s) (informational only – nothing persuasive). • Share information about registering to vote. • Encourage people to vote (not how to vote). • Continue sharing this information through election day.

Frequently Asked Questions

1. Who can take a position on a ballot measure, such as school levy or bond, a legislative bill, initiative, or a referendum?

A local PTA or council may take a position, provided it does not conflict with adopted Washington State PTA or National PTA positions, resolutions, or issues, or the values, mission, vision, and purposes of PTA. A position can be taken by the board of directors or membership, but it is the best practice to have important ballot measure decisions made by the members.

2. What positions can a local PTA or council take?

A PTA may support, oppose, or choose to take no position.

3. Can a local PTA or council vote to endorse a candidate for public office?

No. The *WSPTA Uniform Bylaws* (Article 2, paragraph G) prohibit both 501(c)3 and 501(c)4 PTAs from engaging in any activities in support of or in opposition to any candidate for public office (city/county council, school board, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, along with all other public offices). PTAs may not make contributions, publish, or distribute statements, or use PTA board or membership lists to support any candidate. Individual PTA leaders may endorse candidates personally but must not mention PTA in any endorsement, including on social media.

4. When can a vote take place?

The issue can be voted on at a regularly scheduled or special meeting with the following legal notice as required by nonprofit law:

- Regularly scheduled board or membership meetings = 10 days' notice
- Special board meetings (notification to all board members of place, date, time, and purpose of the meeting) = 5 days' notice
- Special membership meetings (notification to all members of place, date, time, and purpose of the meeting) = 10 days' notice

5. Can a vote take place at school?

A PTA can use school property if it has signed a facility use agreement with the school or district.

6. Can a local PTA or council contribute funds to a bond/levy or initiative/referendum campaign?

Yes, if the members vote to do so (see above process to vote). The PTA must have, or add, a member-approved budget line item for the donation to allow for the allocation or reallocation of funds. For information on lobbying limits, see question 11.

7. What communication methods can be used to announce the results of a vote and to share

If using school district channels for communication, PTAs must comply with the same restrictions as the district. A PTA may not promote a position on its district-sponsored website, school-sponsored newsletter, kid mail, school reader board, or at a school or district event. Only factual information can be shared using district resources.

PTAs may share persuasive information via all PTA communication channels, including email, social media, meeting time, coffee chats, non-district websites and newsletters, etc.

8. What if a member objects to a position taken by the board of directors?

The board of directors is accountable to the membership. If a member objects to a position taken by the board, they may request that the item be placed on the agenda for a membership meeting.

9. What if a member brings up an issue at a membership meeting?

If a member makes a motion regarding an issue, the motion would be handled like any other motion. There would be a second, discussion, and vote.

10. What if a member brings a petition to a membership meeting?

The members choose how to handle it. The presiding officer can ask if anyone objects to the petition. If most members object, the petition must be put away. The presiding officer can ask if the members wish to discuss the petition. If so, they can ask if they wish to do so at this meeting, or at a future meeting (to allow time to gather and present information.)

11. Are there limits to how much lobbying a local PTA or council can do?

Lobbying activities by PTAs are **not prohibited** by law. However, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) limits lobbying activities of all 501(c)(3) organizations to “an insubstantial part” of its activities. Under current law, there are two ways a PTA can meet the “insubstantial” test:

No Section 501(h) election - One way to meet the “insubstantial” requirement is to limit expenditures on lobbying activities to a small percentage of the organization’s overall expenditures – generally accepted to be no more than 5%.

Section 501(h) election - The second method is to make a Section 501(h) election by filling out and filing IRS Form 5768. This simple, single-page form must be filed prior to the end of the fiscal year (June 30) in which you wish to claim the election and allows a PTA to spend up to 20% of its first \$500,000 of its total exempt purpose expenditures in lobbying activities. Once filed, it does not need to be filed for future tax years. You can revoke it at any time for any reason using Form 5768, and it can be reinstated.

Because this “safe harbor” election provides PTAs with absolute certainty as to the amount that can be spent on lobbying activities, **WSPTA recommends that all 501(c)(3) PTAs make a 501(h) election.**

12. What types of activities are considered lobbying?

- Advocating the adoption or rejection of specific legislation.
- Communicating with a legislator (or his or her staff) regarding specific legislation.
- Using the public to contact a legislator (or staff) with respect to specific legislation.
- Local PTA and council examples of lobbying activities/expenses: Legislative Assembly, Focus Day, legislative roundtables, candidate forums, bond/levy, and initiative/referendum campaigns.

13. What types of activities are not considered lobbying?

- Communication to members regarding pending legislation, if you are not asking your members to engage in grassroots lobbying.
- Responding to a legislator’s request for advice or assistance, even about pending legislation.
- Routine communications with legislators or government officials.

For additional help related to taking positions on ballot measures, contact your council or region advocacy chair, or the WSPTA advocacy director PTAadvocacydir@wastatepta.org.