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Fact Sheet

Senate Constitutional Amendment 6 (Simitian)

School District Parcel Taxes

Summary:

SCA 6 allows local school districts to approve a local parcel tax with a 55 percent majority rather than the two-thirds majority currently required. By lowering the threshold, SCA 6 provides for local choice and control, and conforms the vote required for a parcel tax to the 55 percent majority required for local bonds.

What the bill does:

The California Constitution currently requires a two-thirds majority of a school district's voters to approve a local parcel tax (a flat tax usually assessed per lot of land, regardless of market value). SCA 6 lowers that requirement to 55 percent. SCA 6 does not raise taxes; it simply provides for local choice and control.

Given the State's on-going financial crisis, school districts are now facing severe cutbacks in funding. Worse still, it is unlikely that the State will be able to provide adequate funds in the foreseeable future. Now more than ever, school districts need to find ways to help them maintain quality programs. SCA 6 provides school districts with much-needed flexibility in raising local educational funds.

In addition to helping school districts raise revenues, SCA 6 will also give local districts more power to fund programs that are important to them. Most State funding is earmarked for particular programs. When it comes to raising money that school districts can control, there's not much choice. A parcel tax is the *only* way local school districts can raise discretionary revenue. SCA 6 will increase local choice for local education needs, while ensuring that every dollar generated goes to the school district for locally identified purposes. In the past, school districts have used parcel tax money to enhance instructional programs, hire additional teachers, and support libraries, music, and arts programs— all reflecting local priorities in their local districts.

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California still lags behind most states in per pupil spending. Although the current financial crisis will lead to reduced state spending on education, schools do not have to languish as a result. Voters can take local action to keep education strong, as they did when they recently approved a similar proposition on local school construction bonds, lowering the approval threshold from two-thirds to 55 percent. SCA 6 conforms the threshold required for parcel taxes with the voter-approved threshold for school bonds.