



ESPLOST REFERENDUM March 16, 2021



Frequently Asked Questions

- 1. What is an EDUCATION SPLOST (ESPLOST)?**
An Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (ESPLOST) allows local school districts the option to ask voters for the ability to levy and to collect a one percent sales tax to help fund improvements. It can be used to pay for capital projects or to retire debt, but cannot be used to pay operating expenses, such as salaries. ESPLOSTs are enacted by a referendum.
- 2. Will early voting be available?** Yes, from February 23-March 13 at the Griffin Bell Golf and Conference Center (GSW) as follows:
 - February 23 thru February 26 Tuesday thru Friday 8:00 a.m. till 5:00 P.M.
 - March 1 thru March 5 Monday thru Friday 8:00 a.m. till 5:00 P.M.
 - March 8 thru 12, 2021 Monday thru Friday 8:00 a.m. till 5:00 P.M.
- 3. When is the ESPLOST vote?**
The election is **Tuesday, March 16, 2021**. The polls will be open from 7 a.m. to 7 p.m.
- 4. How much money would be raised and how long would this sales tax be in place?**
The ESPLOST extension is for a \$30 million limit or for a 5-year period, whichever comes first.

- 5. Would the proposed ESPLOST be a tax increase?**
NO! If approved, the sales tax for education would remain at its current level. A “yes” vote would simply continue the current 1% sales tax for education an additional five years or until approved SPLOST funds (\$30 million) are collected, whichever comes first. Collection of the ESPLOST extension would begin only after the current ESPLOST ends in June, 2022.
- 6. Why do we need to extend our current ESPLOST?**
We need to continue to pay off the debt of the new high school, to make other improvements to facilities and equipment, as well as upgrade technology resources. Our citizens have actively supported education for years and the passage of this SPLOST extension would be a strong demonstration of continued school support by our community.
- 7. Why ESPLOST?**
The ESPLOST is **not** a property tax. It provides a method of funding the cost of educational improvements and to retire the bond debt in which everyone contributes, not just property owners. Additionally, the sales tax is paid by everyone who shops for goods or stays in Sumter County, including visitors.
- 8. Why is the school system proposing to sell bonds in the SPLOST extension?**
By selling bonds, the school system will be able to immediately address several

of the projects without having to wait for proceeds to be collected.

- 9. Why isn't the money being used for teacher salaries and day-to-day operational expenses?**
State law prohibits using ESPLOST proceeds for salaries or day-to-day operational expenses. However, passing this sales tax vote will free up funds to meet required financial obligations without having to rely on excessive ad valorem taxes.
- 10. Will the school system need to continue to renew the ESPLOST in the future?**
Yes and No. That will be a decision for a future Board of Education and the voters. However, the passage of previous ESPLOSTs has enabled Sumter County to have modern school facilities and equipment without creating a burden on property tax payers. For this reason, it would be wise for us to consider ESPLOST renewal in years to come.
- 11. Is the school system eligible for any state funds for facilities?**
YES! If the ESPLOST is approved by the voters, the system will apply for and expects to receive approximately \$14 million in state funds for new construction, renovation or facility modification.

- 12. Why should people who do not have children in school support the ESPLOST extension?**
The ESPLOST extension keeps ad valorem taxes stable. Additionally, the children are not the only ones who benefit from good schools. The social and economic strength of a community are greatly influenced by the school system. Good schools mean well-prepared citizens, a strong labor market, and an inviting atmosphere for both living and working. One of the key questions asked by industrial/commercial or residential prospects looking to move into a community is, “What is the quality of the schools?”
- 13. What would happen if the ESPLOST did not pass?**
Without the extension of the current ESPLOST, most of the proposed projects could not be accomplished without property tax increases and the Board wants to avoid any major property tax increases. There would be many lost opportunities for future Sumter County students.
- 14. Is this ESPLOST different from the Sumter County Commission SPLOST?**
Yes. The Education SPLOST is a special sales tax approved by citizens for improvements for school facilities, debt reduction, and improvements. The county SPLOST is a special tax designed to fund county projects identified by the county commissioners.



LIST OF PROPOSED PROJECTS:

- Retire the Bond Debt of the New High School
- System-wide Security Improvements
- New Classroom Technology
- Safer and More Efficient Buses
- System-wide Facility Improvement at each of our schools

