

**West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District
Frequently Asked Questions
on the August 29, 2023 Special Election Ballot**

Why did the West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District place the special tax measure on the ballot?

The West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District is dependent on volunteer firefighters. These volunteers donate their time to serve the community, plus complete the state and federally required hours of training each year. Without these volunteers, the community would have extremely limited fire protection.

Increasing fuel and insurance costs coupled with the high cost of purchasing and maintaining our fire station, fire trucks, safety equipment and supplies has put the District in a challenging financial position and is depleting reserve funds.

Although The District has made the tough decisions to ensure all expenditures can be funded from available revenues, it is becoming increasingly difficult to train and retain firefighters on a volunteer basis and purchase lifesaving apparatus and equipment that desperately needs replacing. The District does not have a way to fund these essential needs without a new revenue source.

How much money would the special tax measure raise for the West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District?

The passage of the special tax measure would raise about \$540,000 a year for the Fire District.

What would the proceeds from the special tax measure be spent on?

The funds must be used to provide revenue for the District to use in performing essential fire protection, prevention, and emergency medical response services, including:

- funding operational and capital reserves to preserve the long-term fiscal stability of the District;
- acquisition, maintenance, or replacement of aging apparatus, vehicles, and equipment;
- maintenance and improvements to fire stations;
- compensation for volunteer firefighters; and
- firefighter training.

How will we know that all tax revenue collected will stay local and only go to the West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District?

The proceeds may only be used for the specific purposes described in the ballot measure, which in this case would be fire protection and emergency medical services provided by the West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District. An annual audit report will monitor the receipt and expenditure of such revenue to ensure that the Fire District is receiving the full amount collected and that it is spent on appropriate expenditures.

How will expenditure of special tax funds be monitored?

The District will prepare an annual report, to be filed with its Board of Directors, which shall include the amount of special tax revenues collected and expended each year, and which shall

otherwise comply with the accountability measures established in Government Code Section 59975.1 et seq.

How much will the special tax measure cost property owners?

The proposed special tax for each property type will be printed on the election materials to be mailed to registered voters prior to the August 29 election date. For single-family homes, the annual special tax is proposed to be \$125 per year, or \$10.42 per month. There is no additional charge for acreage.

Will this special tax amount increase over time?

Yes, the rate of the special tax may, at the discretion of the Board, be increased annually commencing in the 2024-25 tax year, by the change in the California Consumer Price Index.

What are the service areas of the West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District?

The District covers approximately 625 square miles. Currently 80 volunteer firefighters provide fire protection and emergency medical services to the communities and surrounding areas of Patterson, Newman, Crows Landing, Westley, El Solyo, and Diablo Grande.

How many years will the tax be collected?

There is no maximum term for the special taxes. This tax is intended to fund ongoing expenditures.

How many votes will it take for the measure to pass?

Passage of the special tax measure requires a 2/3 vote (66.7%) of the ballots submitted.

Why did the board decide to put this measure on the ballot during this difficult economic time?

For many years the West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District has avoided asking the community to pass any kind of tax or assessment until it had completely exhausted all available revenue sources. As the District is struggling to keep up with rapidly increasing operational and capital costs, it has decided to turn to the community at this time, as a last resort and an absolute necessity, in order to fund the operational needs of the Fire District and the community.

Why did the West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District decide on a special tax instead of an assessment?

It was very important for the West Stanislaus County Fire Protection District Board to hold an election that would require a large percentage of the community to support. The Board did not want to impose a tax on the community that was not widely supported and understood. A special tax requires a 2/3 vote (66.7%) of the registered voters, while an assessment only requires a 50% +1 vote of the landowners, some of which may not even live in the community.

When will I receive my ballot?

Ballots will be mailed between July 31 to August 22 to all eligible registered voters.