

# WL voters to face Headlee waiver proposal

By Darrell Clem  
staff writer

## Walled Lake School District

The Walled Lake district serves students in part of the north-west corner of Farmington Hills.

Walled Lake School District voters will decide Monday whether to let their taxes increase faster than inflation — a move school officials have called necessary to avoid massive budget cuts.

Voters snubbed proposals in 1987 and 1988 for a Headlee Amendment override that allows taxes to outpace inflation. But school officials and a citizens committee have mounted an intense campaign to win passage of the latest-proposed override.

They hope the third time will be the charm. "I think we're guardedly optimistic," Schools Superintendent James R. Geisler said. "I think we've got a lot of support, but we've also got a lot of concern about taxes."

The override would allow the school district's millage rate to increase from 33.98 mills to 36 mills, averting \$3.5 million in budget cuts next school year, officials said. The district's current operating budget is about \$48 million.

override would force officials to slash an additional \$22 million from the budget in the following two years, Geisler has said. Officials have been scrambling to keep pace with burgeoning enrollment sparked by area growth.

Under the Headlee override, a property owner whose house has a market value of \$140,000, or a state-qualified valuation of \$70,000, would pay about \$140 more in taxes. A homeowner with a \$200,000 house would pay an additional \$202, while a homeowner with an \$80,000 house would pay \$81 more.

A citizens-led committee has spent about three months calling voters and mailing information seeking support for the override, said panel co-chairman Pat Dohany, Commerce Township treasurer.

"We'll continue to work very hard until the polls close," Dohany said. "I guess we're cautiously optimistic. But there's still a lot of work to be done."

During the citizens campaign, Dohany said, "I haven't had but one person complain about the schools. Some people just don't have the money (to pay more taxes). It has nothing to do with the school district."

However, Dohany said voters want to provide quality education for the consolidated school district that serves 11 communities and had an enrollment of 8,196 students as of March 30. Moreover, he said, many voters know that good schools will help preserve property values.

"We're trying to identify the posi-

tive voters and get them out," Dohany said.

If the override fails, school officials have outlined budget cuts that include, among others, 13 teaching positions, ninth-grade athletics, field trips, junior high alternative education and the gifted and talented program REACH. The district also would freeze or reduce spending for basic classroom supplies such as paper, pencils, computers and transportation.

The override was proposed by a citizens panel that recommended a

three-year plan that also included the operation of two new elementary schools and the addition of 14 new classrooms to existing buildings. The Walled Lake Board of Education voted unanimously to accept the panel's recommendations.

As part of the Headlee override campaign, supporters have emphasized some of the district's accomplishments, such as luring award-winning teachers and achieving honors for such programs as art, music and a districtwide writing program.

"I think the school district has improved its reputation in the last few years," Dohany said.

Officials hope the public's improved perception will translate into votes at the polls, which will be open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

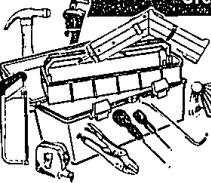
Voters must cast ballots in the precinct in which they live. The nine polling places include Walled Lake Junior High School and the elementary schools of Keith, Commerce, Wixom, Glegary, Twin Beach, Dublin, Oakley Park, and Maple.

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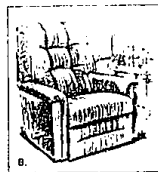


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