Voters OK Headlee waiver by slim margin

By Darrell Clem staff writer

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Walled Lake School District vot-ers, threatened with massive school budget cuts, narrowly approved a proposal Monday to let their taxes increase faster than inflation.

Increase faster than inflation. Voters gave the proposed Headlec Amendment override a 30-vote mar-gin of victory, approving the mca-sure 1,850 to 1,820 in a down-to-the-wire vote that rattled school offi-while towards cials' ner

where vote that ratted school offi-cials herves. "We really began to sweat," school board Presideut Sammy Ruetenik said. The override appeared in trouble as election officials tailled votes from the final precinct at Glengary Elementary School, where a high percentage of senior citizens op-posed the plan. Ruetenik said. But the last-minute surge of oppo-sition failed to block the override that school officials said was neces-sary to avoid budget cuts that would have eliminated 13 teaching posi-tions, ninth-grade athletics and field tips, annog other programs.

tions, ninth-grade athletics and field trips, among other programs. "Was that ever a cliffhanger?" Ruetenik asked Tuesday. "We're pleased that it passed. I wish it could have been a larger margin, but we'll take it. We knew it was going to be close."

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

The current budget is about \$46 million. "This means we don't have to layoff the people or make the pro-gram cuts," Ruetenik said. A failed verride a los would have forced the district to reduce or freeze spending for such basic cleansrom supplies as paper, pencils, computers and trans-

portation, school officials said. When asked if she expects any citi-zens to file a petition with the county elections office sceking a vote re-count, Ruetenik replied, "I don't know. But if they do, that's OK, be-cause we're pretty positive with the vote count." Votes from the Glengary precinct were counted twice Monday night, she said. The current budget is about \$48

she said. A recount petition must be filed within seven days after the county certifies the votes, said Jan Stickley, director of elections. The votes are expected to be certified Monday, she said.

School trustee David Flammer

"will allow us to rection that we've said the override "will allow us to continue in the direction that we've set out" in a long-term strategic plan focusing on broad-based school dis-

focusing on broad-based school dis-trict improvements. However, school trustees stressed that they must spend wisely in the district that serves 11 communities and has an enrollment of 2/165 stu-dents. "We're going to have to be sensi-tive to the needs of our elderly cili-sens and be comervaive in starling new programs," Ruetenik said. "We plan to be pruvdent."

verride came 15 months

The override came 15 months af-ger district voters approved a \$47.8 million bond issue for new school construction that includes, among other projects, two new elementar-ies and a new junion high. Under the Headlee override, a property owner whose house has a market value of \$140,000, or a state-cupalized valuation of \$77,000, can expect to pay about \$142 more in taxes. The tab will increase \$202 for a homeowner with a \$200,000 house and jump by \$18 for a homeowner with an \$30,000 house.

