

BALLOT MEASURE 34-346

Title: Local Option Levy to fund Public Safety Services in Washington County

Question: Shall Washington County enhance public safety services by levying 66 cents per \$1000 of assessed property value for five years beginning in 2026. This measure may cause property taxes to increase by more than 3%.

Here is more information:

The measure would replace a 5 year levy expiring in June 2026 and fund 16% of the public safety budget.

This measure would maintain and enhance current levels of public safety services including (note: statistics cited below is for 2021-2024):

- Investigating and prosecuting crimes like theft, car theft, break-ins and graffiti.
 - An average of one vehicle has been stolen per day
- Prosecution of child abuse and child pornography cases.
 - Child abuse reports increased by 17% averaging 9 reports every day.
- Protecting victims of domestic violence by expanding assistance for emergency programs and preventing domestic violence in the first place.
 - Domestic violence reports increase by 22%, an average of four per day, and even more violence may be going unreported. Expanding assistance will be directed to prevent further violence.
- Combating the impact of drugs like fentanyl and dismantling drug trafficking organizations.
 - Over the last 3 years, the Sheriff's office has seized 1.3 million fentanyl pills, preventing tens of thousands of overdoses.
- Fully funding the jail to keep those with more dangerous charges in court-ordered custody.
 - The jail serves every police agency in the county but is operating below capacity due to staffing and funding gaps; these would be remedied.
- Preventing crime with mental health response teams, job training, employment and addiction treatment to keep youth and adults out of a revolving door.
 - Specially trained deputies and mental health professionals connect those with mental health crises to supportive services, improving community safety and often avoiding criminal justice escalation.

If the replacement levy does not pass, it would result in undesirable reductions in services.

Arguments in favor:

- Countywide Public Safety systems and services are vital to our community's priorities.
- Since voters approved the last levy, state funding has decreased while costs have increased. Renewal of the levy would preserve public safety and keep up with inflation. It would also address current gaps in public safety services.

Arguments against:

- Renewal would increase property tax by 19c per \$1000 of assessed value. Affordability is a consideration as family budgets are pressured with recent inflation.

Factors the committee considered:

- The WashCoDems platform places a high priority on public safety and justice.
 - Article 1 Plank 6: We support local public safety measures aimed at reducing injustices in all communities in Washington County, especially marginalized communities
 - Article 1 Plank 14: We support a policing system based on community support and cultural awareness, a prosecutorial system based on equitable access to the court system, and a detention system with an emphasis on corrective actions and compensation for victims.
- The voters pamphlet has support from county/city elected leaders, judiciary, police chiefs and partners that support children, mental health and domestic abuse. However, most supportive arguments appear to be submitted by a “faceless PAC”. No spokesperson is identified.
- The prior levy in 2020 passed with 55% Yes votes in a presidential cycle, indicating community support has been marginal.
- Is there “total budget” priority / accountability to improve policing practices and supportive services?
 - Specifically to address culture and training viz. work environment for female staff, mental health protocols, crisis deescalation, etc. ?
- Absence of budgetary oversight / advisory body and community report out

Measures/Bonds/Levies Ad Hoc Endorsement Committee recommends < >**LINKS:**

Filing: [34-346-public-safety-levy](#)

<https://www.washingtoncountyor.gov/cao/measure-34-346-proposed-local-option-levy-2025>

[Measure 34-346: Local Option Levy](#)

<https://washcosafecommunities.com/> (possibly a PAC)

[FAQ](#) provided for May 2020 levy that includes allocation of funds for various services.

<https://www.washingtoncountyor.gov/sheriff/professional-standards/get-involved#advisory-committees>
<https://www.opb.org/article/2025/04/23/salsa-gate-lawsuit-washington-county-sheriffs-office-settlement-deputy/> <refers to advisory councils at the very end>

Concerning media reports

<https://www.koin.com/local/washington-county/washington-county-pays-175k-to-former-deputy-who-alleged-sexual-harassment/>

<https://www.opb.org/article/2025/04/23/salsa-gate-lawsuit-washington-county-sheriffs-office-settlement-deputy/>

Contacts:

Filed by Alex Barnett, County Counsel, 503 846-8747

Community spokesperson ??

**Edited by Sudarshan Cadambi with Committee inputs
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