



SMAC PTA LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

December 14, 2020

While we wait for the legislative session to begin, there is an important SMSD bond issue on the ballot in January. SMAC PTA supports the passage of this bond. Below are details about the bond and the voting process, as well as a little insight into the legislative session ahead.

SMDS BOND 2021 DETAILS

Below are some highlights. For more details, see the Bond 2021 section of the district website.

- \$264 million dollar bond. Cost to taxpayers is just \$8 per \$100,000 in home value
- Five elementary schools to be rebuilt
- Major maintenance/upgrades of HVAC systems, roofs, and lighting
- Playground renovations for inclusivity and complying with ADA requirements
- Every SMSD feeder area benefits from the projects included in the bond initiative
- **Provides a pathway to restore a reasonable workload to secondary teachers (shift from teaching 6 to 5 periods)**

THE BOND'S IMPACT ON TEACHERS

Again, you can see the complete list of bond projects on the district website, but it's important to highlight the impact the bond will have on our teachers. SMSD secondary (middle and high school) teachers are teaching 6 periods a day, while their peers in surrounding districts are teaching 5. There's some interesting history on why that is the case, but it's just important to know that our teachers are overworked and overwhelmed. And that's not good for our kids.

To shift the teachers from 6 to 5 periods, the district needs to hire 75+ new teachers. We won't be receiving that kind of funding from the state. Passing the bond provides the flexibility needed to free up some operating funds to hire more teachers. Here's how:

- Identified projects will be paid for solely from bond funds, freeing up capital funds that had previously been used for a portion of these types of large projects.
- More capital funds, means custodial salaries can be shifted to the capital fund. A recent legislation change allows districts to pay these salaries out of capital funds vs. operating.
- Shifting custodial salaries to capital funds, frees up operating funds to hire more teachers.

This bond is a cost effective way to modernize the district while also getting our teachers back to a reasonable workload. It benefits our students, the teachers, the district, and the entire community.

IMPORTANT VOTING INFORMATION

The **January 26, 2021** bond proposal will be conducted by mail in ballot only. All voters registered as of **December 28, 2020** will automatically receive a mail in ballot. Some other important dates:

Dec 29 – Jan 5: Late Voter Registration. You can still register, but will need to apply for a ballot.

January 5: Last day to apply for an advance ballot if you need your ballot sent to an address other than your voter registration address. Let's get those college kids voting!

January 6: Ballots to be sent out...look for your ballot in your mailbox.

January 26, 2021: Ballots must be received by noon at the election office to be counted.

LOOKING AHEAD – LEGISLATIVE SESSION

The Kansas Legislative session starts on January 11, 2021. Unfortunately, the November election did not go well for public education. Across the state and in some parts of Johnson County, some of our pro-public education legislators were defeated and replaced with legislators who are less supportive our public schools.

It will be important for us all to stay up to date on legislation being introduced that could be detrimental to our schools and not in line with Kansas PTA and SMSD legislative priorities. We may need to encourage parents to reach out to their legislators, as needed. Below are some issues education advocates believe might come up in the upcoming legislative session:

- More attempts to divert public tax dollars to private schools. With the makeup of the new legislature, these attempts could prove successful this year.
- Scheduled funding increases previously approved by the legislature, after the courts determined our schools were not adequately funded, could be in jeopardy.
- Medicaid Expansion, an SMSD legislative priority, likely has no path again this year.

These are just a few of the things to keep an eye on. The COVID pandemic may also present some unexpected legislative impacts. This is all the more reason for everyone to be mindful of what is happening in Topeka and the effect legislation could have on our schools.