

By Representative Richardson

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to a straw ballot referendum on
3 an increase in the tax on sales, use, and other
4 transactions for education; proposing a certain
5 question to the voters of Florida and
6 submitting said question to the voters in the
7 general election, November 5, 2002; providing
8 an effective date.

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10 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that caring and
11 qualified public school teachers play a critical role in
12 preparing children and young adults for success in higher
13 education and in the workplace, and

14 WHEREAS, the Legislature further recognizes that
15 Florida's average teacher salary is \$5,000 below the national
16 average and that teacher salaries in the state are not
17 sufficient to recruit and retain the caring and qualified
18 teachers we need, and

19 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that the cost of
20 providing teachers with medical care and prescription drug
21 coverage has risen dramatically, forcing school districts to
22 increase contributions to health insurance in lieu of
23 increasing teacher salaries, and

24 WHEREAS, the Legislature recognizes that school
25 districts have many localized needs, such as escalating
26 operating costs for utilities and transportation, class size
27 reduction, and teacher development, which are straining
28 already tight district budgets, and

29 WHEREAS, the Legislature wishes to determine the views
30 of the people of Florida regarding a 0.5 percent increase in
31 the rate of the tax on sales, use, and other transactions, to

1 be used for education, by means of a "straw ballot" to be
2 submitted to the voters at the November 2002 general election,
3 and

4 WHEREAS, the Legislature would not implement this
5 increase unless the "straw ballot" question is approved by a
6 supermajority vote, and

7 WHEREAS, the Legislature intends that the entire
8 proceeds from such an increase would be allocated to qualified
9 school districts and be used for instructional personnel
10 salaries and benefits, for certain special programs, and for
11 maintenance and operations costs, and

12 WHEREAS, the Legislature intends that 60 percent of
13 such proceeds would be allocated for increases in
14 instructional personnel salaries and related employee benefits
15 for health insurance and prescription drug programs; that
16 "instructional personnel" should include classroom teachers,
17 pupil personnel service providers, librarians/media
18 specialists, other instructional staff, and instructional
19 paraprofessionals as defined in s. 228.041, Florida Statutes,
20 who are employed in the public school system; and that any
21 classroom teacher or adjunct educator who is not state
22 certified pursuant to s. 231.17, Florida Statutes, would not
23 be eligible to receive revenues from this tax increase, and

24 WHEREAS, the Legislature intends that 20 percent of
25 such proceeds would be used for flex funding, to include class
26 size reduction, tutoring, teacher development, and dropout
27 prevention/aims intervention programs, where "aims
28 intervention" means summer programs, after-school programs,
29 before-school programs, or tutoring programs that are
30 specifically designed to ensure that pupils meet the Florida
31 academic standards as measured by the FCAT, and "class size

1 reduction" means any maintenance and operations expenditure
2 that is designed to reduce the ratio of pupils to classroom
3 teachers, including the use of persons who serve as aides to
4 classroom teachers, and

5 WHEREAS, the Legislature intends that 20 percent of
6 such proceeds would be allocated for the maintenance and
7 operation of schools, exclusive of administrative salaries,
8 and

9 WHEREAS, a school district would not be qualified to
10 receive proceeds from this tax increase unless all schools in
11 the district have an approved school improvement plan pursuant
12 to s. 230.23(16), Florida Statutes, and comply with school
13 advisory council membership composition requirements pursuant
14 to s. 229.58(1), Florida Statutes, and unless the district has
15 adopted the performance-based salary schedule required by s.
16 230.23(5), Florida Statutes, and

17 WHEREAS, such proceeds would be allocated to each
18 qualified school in an equal amount for each student enrolled,
19 and

20 WHEREAS, the funds distributed from the tax increase
21 would be in addition to any other appropriation, transfer, or
22 other allocation of public or private funds from any other
23 source and would not supplant, replace, or cause a reduction
24 in other school district funding sources, and

25 WHEREAS, each school district that receives such
26 proceeds would be required, on a quarterly basis, to make
27 available to the public and distribute, in an easy to
28 understand format, the expenditures of such proceeds allocated
29 to the school district, and

30 WHEREAS, the tax increase would be reviewed after 5
31 years by the Department of Education, the district school

1 superintendents, and the local communities and would be
2 automatically repealed and reviewed by the Legislature after
3 10 years, NOW, THEREFORE,

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5 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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7 Section 1. On November 5, 2002, concurrent with the
8 general election, there shall be held in all counties of the
9 state a "straw ballot" to elicit the views of the public on a
10 matter of vital interest to the State of Florida.

11 Section 2. The following question shall be placed upon
12 the "straw ballot" on November 5, 2002:

13 Do you favor an increase in the state tax on sales,
14 use, and other transactions of 0.5 percent, with an automatic
15 repeal and review of such increase by the Legislature after a
16 period of 10 years, if 60 percent of the revenues from such
17 increase are used to increase salaries and benefits for pubic
18 school instructional personnel, 20 percent of such revenues
19 are used for special programs to reduce class size, to provide
20 for teacher development, and to provide for tutoring, dropout
21 prevention, and similar programs, and 20 percent of such
22 revenues are used for maintenance and operation of schools?

23
24FOR THE SALES TAX INCREASE FOR EDUCATION

25AGAINST THE SALES TAX INCREASE FOR EDUCATION

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27 Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a
28 law.

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HOUSE SUMMARY

Provides for submission of a "straw ballot" question to the voters of the state at the November 2002 general election to determine their support for a 0.5 percent sales tax increase to increase instructional personnel salaries and benefits, provide for certain special school programs, and provide for school maintenance and operation.