



Sarasota County Legislative Delegation



Chairman:

Representative Julio Gonzalez

Vice Chairman:

Senator Greg Steube

Delegation Members:

Representative Jim Boyd

Representative Joe Gruters

Representative Wengay "Newt" Newton

September 28, 2017

Chair Caroline Zucker
Sarasota County School Board
1960 Landings Boulevard
Sarasota, FL 34231

Dear Chair Zucker:

It has come to our attention that the Sarasota County School Board is considering a vote of the qualified electors of Sarasota County on a continuation of the ad valorem millage rate for operating expenses of the School District ("referendum") via a special election. Although we understand the chronological circumstances requiring an out-of-sequence election to take place at this time, the Sarasota County Legislative Delegation, and indeed the state legislature, is deeply concerned over the unnecessary use of taxpayer funds.

As you are aware special election referenda are marred by low voter turnouts and those involving the determination of a School Board millage rate have been no exception. Moreover, the past four special elections have incurred a total cost to Sarasota County taxpayers of over \$1.2 million dollars.

It is our belief that such use of taxpayer funds for a predictable event is unnecessary. Although our delegation firmly believes in protecting home rule, we cannot continue to support special election referenda raising questions that are temporally and substantively foreseeable.

Consequently, we recommend the Sarasota School Board, in considering the upcoming millage referendum, propose the approved millage be set until the fiscal year ending June 30, 2021 so as to place this predictable and recurring public question before voters during the general election cycle beginning with the November 2020 general election. Such a proposal by the School Board would then ensure greater voter participation in future millage questions and cost savings to taxpayers.

I thank you very much for your consideration, and as always, look forward to working with you in the future.

Most Respectfully,

Julio Gonzalez

Greg Steube

Jim Boyd

Joe Gruters