

Surtax FAQ

Q: What does it mean that the half-cent sales surtax “sunset” on December 31, 2020?

A: It means that if the surtax is not renewed this election, the dollars will cease for funding improvements and repairs to our schools.

Q: Can sales surtax funds be used to fund teacher salaries?

A: No, per state statute, sales surtax funds can only be used to meet critical capital funding needs which includes repairs, upgrades and renewals for facilities, educational technology and security.

Q: How does the public know where the money is going for surtax dollars raised?

A: An Independent Citizens Oversight Committee (ICOC) meets bi-monthly to ensure funds are spent appropriately. An external audit company also conducts bi-annual audits on the program. Thus far, BPS has achieved 9 of 9 perfect audits of its surtax use.

Q: Why should I care about whether or not the surtax is renewed?

A: The surtax has helped repair critically failing facilities and improve learning environments for students across Brevard County. Better quality schools spur higher home prices and lower crime rates. In addition, since 2015, nearly \$200 million has been locally invested in construction projects throughout our community.

Q: How does the surtax renewal affect me?

A: If renewed, you would not notice any impact since you have been contributing for the past six years. A typical household income of \$50,000 that spends 10% of their income on taxable items pays about \$25 annually toward the half-cent surtax.

Q: Do other counties have similar programs to support their schools?

A: Yes! When you visit Orange, Osceola, Seminole and Volusia Counties and spend money there, you are contributing to support their schools.

Q: What types of needs still exist that require this funding?

A: Critical school needs remaining include more than \$66 million in roof renewals, \$32 million for plumbing and electrical systems and \$36 million for expansion of school security upgrades. A detailed accounting of school- and facility-based projects is available for review at: <https://www.brevardschools.org/Page/17226>

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Q: How do I know my money will continue to be spent wisely?

A: With the surtax renewal, we make a relentless commitment to our community to continue to spend the surtax dollars we receive responsibly and with transparency. An itemized list of investments has been published to our website at www.brevardschools.org/surtaxrenewal, so the community understands exactly where the dollars will go. In addition, we will acquire no new debt through this initiative – holding true to our original commitment. We will continue with the Independent Citizen Oversight Committee (ICOC), who will continue to meet and report to the school board and community on our management of the surtax and adherence to our commitments, and we will continue to have external audits, at least annually, and report to the board and community in regular meetings.

Q: I don't have children or grandchildren in the school district. Why should I pay more to support local schools?

A: An educated population is essential to creating a strong community. Better schools have a direct impact on lowering crime rates, lead to less strain on social programs and help improve the economic strength of the community. Brevard County continues to be an "A" rated school district which incentivizes companies to move and build their headquarters here and help to grow our local economy.

Q: How does spending on school facilities impact student achievement?

A: Researchers have found that students in deteriorating school buildings score between 5 to 11 percentile points lower on standardized achievement tests than students in modern buildings after controlling for income level. Studies have also found that teacher satisfaction is influenced by the physical condition of schools, and it those conditions remain an important predictor in teachers' decisions to leave their positions.

Q: Where can I learn more about the ICOC for Brevard Public Schools surtax program?

A: Please visit the link included here to learn more about the ICOC and review their audits and findings. <https://f102201431.schoolwires.net/Page/17228>

Q: When do voters get to decide if they are in favor of renewing the half-cent sales surtax?

A: The surtax vote will appear on the November 3, 2020 general election ballot. Early voting will take place from Monday, October 19, 2020 - Saturday, October 31, 2020. You can find your polling place at: <https://www.votebrevard.gov/Voter-Information/Find-Your-Precinct> or register to vote by mail at: <https://www.votebrevard.gov/Ballots-by-Mail/Request-a-Mail-Ballot>.