Great Oaks levy request:
Renewal of expiring 2.7-mill operating levy for a continuing period

About Great Oaks:
Great Oaks serves 36 Ohio school districts reaching over 2,200 square miles in 12 southwestern Ohio counties.

Great Oaks CAREER CAMPUSES
Diamond • Laurel • Live • Scarlet

With four public campuses in southwest Ohio and workforce development programs in 28 regional high schools, Great Oaks offers nationally-recognized career and professional training and education for nearly 3,000 high school students on campus and more than 15,000 middle and high school students in their schools each year. In addition, thousands of adults take short-term classes or full-time career training.

Over 30 programs provide certification or licensure for students in career fields from aviation mechanics to veterinary assisting, for robotics to nursing to computer technology. Students can also graduate with college credit, offering them a variety of options for the future. Partnerships with hundreds of employers, workforce investment boards, and other organizations ensures that Great Oaks programs are on the cutting edge of industry and are designed to serve the immediate and future needs of the region.

Great Oaks' value to the community:
- A fall 2017 study by the UC Economics Center showed that for every $1 provided in local funding, Great Oaks provided $3 to the local economy—for a total economic impact of 115 million dollars annually.
- The UC study also showed that adults who completed career training received a 250% return on their investment in the first five years after finishing. NOTE: The return on investment for high schoolers wasn't calculated, as they receive a free public education at Great Oaks.
- A July 2017 community survey showed that 88% of the community is familiar with Great Oaks. Of those who know Great Oaks, 96.8% had a favorable (or neutral) opinion.
- Twice as many survey respondents said it was more important for schools to provide job-ready skills (56.1%) as to prepare them for college (28.5%).

The levy request:
- Great Oaks currently has an annual operating budget of about $64 million. Of that amount, about 66%, or $42 million, comes from a 2.7-mill operating levy. These are the ONLY local funds provided to Great Oaks. The remainder of the budget comes from state (30%) and federal (4%) funds.
- The current 2.7-mill levy was approved in 2008 and expires in 2019. Great Oaks is asking voters to renew the levy at the same amount for a continuing time.
- Great Oaks has not asked for an increase in local funding in 30 years, and is not asking for an increase now—simply a continuing renewal at the current level. 2.7 mills was originally approved in 1988 and renewed at the same rate in 1998 and 2008. Great Oaks is fiscally responsible, and has been able to complete building renovations, hire and retain staff, and update sophisticated equipment without additional funding.
- Area homeowners pay $5/month per $100,000 in assessed value.
- Without this levy, Great Oaks would lose over 60% of its funding—and would be unable to continue to operate. Affiliate school districts would be required to provide career-technical education programs individually, a much more expensive way to offer the service.

(over)

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

How much does the Great Oaks levy cost me?
Residents pay about $60 per year for a $100,000 home. In most areas, the average home is about $200,000, so the cost of the levy would be $120/year.

What is Great Oaks' budget?
The current budget is $64 million; this is an increase of about ½ of 1% per year over the past 10 years, despite an increase in students.

How do we know that you won't come back to voters and ask for more millage?
Great Oaks has lived within its means for 50 years. The current millage (2.7 mills) has been in place since 1988, and we're only asking to renew the current levy, which is set to expire in 2019. We have been able to stay up-to-date with technology, building maintenance and renovations, student growth, and rising costs throughout that time—and our projections show that we will be able to continue to do so.

How do joint vocational school district (JVSD) expenses compare to traditional school district expenses?
JVSD, or career-technical, school districts like Great Oaks spend the majority of their budgets on such educational expenses as technology, materials, teachers, and classrooms. We also have busing and cafeteria costs, just like other school districts.

However, hands-on career programs often require investments in additional equipment. For instance, students who are learning to program and operate robotic equipment must have access to up-to-date technology. The same is true with aviation maintenance students who must have aircraft engines to learn on, culinary students who study in a commercial kitchen, firefighting students who need to learn to handle the firefighting equipment they'll use on the job, and so on. That's why Ohio created joint vocational school districts—so traditional school districts don't have to make these investments. Instead, communities share the cost so that their students have a range of opportunities.

What about building renovations? How will you pay for those?
Unlike traditional school districts, career-technical school districts must pay for construction and renovations through the general fund. Since 2008, Great Oaks has renovated and updated two campuses—Scarlet Oaks and Diamond Oaks—and the remaining two campuses (Laurel Oaks and Live Oaks) will be updated through the levy renewal. In addition, Great Oaks was able to secure $1.5 million in state funding for Laurel Oaks building projects.

The ballot language:

PROPOSED TAX LEVY (RENEWAL)
GREAT OAKS CAREER CAMPUSES

A majority of affirmative vote is necessary for passage.

A renewal of a tax for the benefit of the Great Oaks Career Campuses (including Diamond Oaks, Laurel Oaks, Live Oaks and Scarlet Oaks), a joint vocational school district, Counties of Brown, Clermont, Clinton, Fayette, Greene, Hamilton, Highland, Madison, Pickaway, Ross and Warren, Ohio, for the purpose of CURRENT OPERATING EXPENSES at a rate not exceeding two and seven-tenths (2.7) mills for each one dollar of valuation, which amounts to twenty-seven cents ($0.27) for each one hundred dollars of valuation, for a continuing period of time, commencing in 2019 first due in calendar year 2020.