

## 18.20 School Construction Bond Reform

*Resolution passed 1986; amended 2010; amended 2021*

**Whereas**, a purpose of Washington State PTA is to advocate for legislation that furthers the education, physical and mental health, welfare, and safety of children and youth; and

**Whereas**, the constitution of the State of Washington says that the “paramount duty” of the state is to provide “ample funds” for schools, yet school construction funds were not part of the 2012 McCleary case on basic education funding; and

**Whereas**, Washington state’s constitution, ratified in 1889, required a simple majority to pass a ballot measure authorizing school construction bonds. Legislation passed in 1943 to provide wartime tax relief changed the threshold to a supermajority of 60 percent to pass all bonds including school construction bonds; and

**Whereas**, in Washington state, school construction bonds are the primary means for funding school construction. A bond is a long-term investment that authorizes the district to purchase property for schools, construct new schools, or modernize existing schools. Bonds are sold to investors who are repaid with interest over time from property tax collections, generally between 12-20 years; and

**Whereas**, the 40 percent validation (40% of the total voters credited with voting in the last General Election) and 60 percent super-majority requirements that apply to school construction bonds lead to some district bonds failing by a small margin of votes, narrowly missing the supermajority of 60 percent but exceeding 50 percent. In other words, a minority number of voters prevented the ballot measure from passing. This leaves districts unable to complete critical school construction projects (including safety measures, renovations and expansions) across the state exceeding hundreds of millions of dollars annually; and

**Whereas**, districts struggling to pass school construction bonds leads to further inequity, overcrowding, and unsafe buildings. Some school districts can pass measures to build, modernize, or expand schools to accommodate growth and smaller class sizes or improve safety and security of school buildings while others cannot, resulting in inequitable learning environments for students; and

**Whereas**, simple majority for school levies is the current law which removed both the 40 percent validation and supermajority requirements.

**Therefore, be it**

**Resolved**, that Washington State PTA and its local PTAs and councils advocate for legislation that would lead to a constitutional amendment to reform school construction bond requirements to:

- Remove the 40 percent validation requirement
- Lower the 60 percent super-majority to no more than 55 percent with a strong preference for a simple majority of 50 percent.