

## Message for Houston County School System Employees

Voters will be asked on March 1, 2016, to vote yea or nay on a 2017-2022 E-SPLOST, a five-year, one-cent sales tax. It is the Board of Education's responsibility to inform the public about the pending referendum, but it is also required to strictly adhere to the Ethics in Government Act.

As Board employees, we must ensure that we comply with this ethics law which states: *No agency and no person acting on behalf of an agency shall make, directly or indirectly, any contribution to any campaign committee, political action committee, or political organization or to any candidate...* [O.C.G.A. 21-5-30.2(b)]



## Questions to Ask Yourself

When engaging in any activity regarding the E-SPLOST referendum, ask yourself these questions:

- Am I in any way using school funds?
- Am I in any way giving the impression that the school district is biased or in any way promoting a “yes” vote?

These two questions and common sense should prevent most prohibited conduct. When in doubt, contact the HCBOE Community & School Affairs Department.

# E-SPLOST

FOR SCHOOLS



1100 Main Street, P.O. Box 1850  
Perry, GA 31069  
478-988-6200

# E-SPLOST

FOR SCHOOLS



MARCH 1, 2016  HOUSTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

## Education Special Purpose Local Option Sales Tax (E-SPLOST) Vote

## Complying with the Ethics in Government Act



HOUSTON COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION  
HIGH-ACHIEVING STUDENTS

## Permitted Activities

### As Board employees we MAY, if we so choose:

1. Endorse and support a referendum on our own time as individual citizens.
2. Work actively for its passage after work hours.
3. Make a personal contribution to a campaign.
4. Discuss the referendum during work hours for **informational purposes ONLY**, not promotional reasons. For example, if parents ask you questions, answer them directly, but do NOT in any way encourage them to vote yes. If more than a short response is required, refer them to the HCBOE Website and the central office.
5. Promote the referendum during non-work hours by presenting at meetings. Make it clear, however, that you are speaking as “John Q. Public” and not a representative of a school or the school system.
6. As individuals, endorse and contribute to a referendum campaign during non-work hours. Any endorsement, however, whether written or oral, should contain a disclaimer that the endorsement is being made in the individual’s capacity and not as a school official.



## As a School Board Member or Administrator, we may:

1. Encourage the formation of separate, independent, “arms-length” committees to support an issue campaign. The school board should make certain, however, that such a committee receives no preferential treatment.
2. Appear at public events and discuss **fact-based information** about the referendum. Be very careful, however, to share “just the facts” with no persuasion to “vote yes.” Asking the citizens to go to the polls and vote is acceptable.
3. Speak at parent-teacher organization meetings on behalf of the referendum as long as the attendance at the meeting is voluntary and the meeting is not held during the school day.
4. Use school system funds to provide the public information on a referendum, as long as the information is factual and does not endorse a particular view. For example, it is permissible to develop “Frequently Asked Questions” with factual information about both sides presented.



## Prohibited Activities

### As Board employees:

1. Do not spend time during the work day in support of a referendum.
2. During work hours, do not appear at public events to speak on behalf of a referendum, solicit campaign contribution, or distribute campaign literature.
3. Do not use Board resources, including materials or our time, to promote a referendum. Do not copy or distribute promotional materials, such as flyers and brochures, at public expense. Do not provide a committee office space or allow it to use the school district’s copier, stationery, telephones or support personnel.
4. Do not place “Vote Yes” signs or posters on school property or wear campaign buttons.
5. Do not distribute campaign material during work hours. Do not leave pamphlets on the office counter or stuff teachers’ mailboxes.
6. Do not send materials home with students in support of a referendum. School newsletters, newspapers, or other educational literature published with school funds may not promote a referendum.
7. As administrators, be careful to not appear coercive toward faculty and staff. Do not seek to influence those supervised to vote a certain way. Make it clear that employees will not suffer adverse consequences if they choose not to support or contribute to a referendum.