

This non-partisan report was prepared by volunteer members of the League of Women Voters of Lane County.

Measure 20-381 Eugene Library Levy

Official Title: Five-Year Library Local Option Levy

Referral: This measure was referred to voters by the City of Eugene.

Question: Shall Eugene levy \$4,300,000 for five years beginning, July 1, 2026, to maintain and enhance library operations and services? This measure may cause property taxes to increase more than three percent.

Financial Impact

The levy will be increased from \$0.15 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation to \$0.19 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation. The City estimates that a typical homeowner would pay a tax of \$54 per year for this levy, an increase of \$17 over the current rate.

Note: Assessed value (AV) is the value used to calculate property tax. It is shown on the property tax statement. It is NOT the same as real market value (RMV), which is the market price of the home.

The levy would provide approximately \$4.3 million annually for five years for the library.

Probable Result Of A "yes" Vote

A "Yes" vote would maintain current services, would allow for improved programs, including those for early literacy, and would increase access to library services in locations not currently served. Taxes will increase.

Probable Result Of A "no" Vote

The library would lose nearly a quarter of its budget, leading to cuts in services, hours, and staffing. Taxes would decrease for this purpose when the current levy expires.

Background

In addition to funds from the city's general fund, Eugene began relying on a five-year local option levy for library operations in 1998. In 2000, the Bethel and Sheldon Branch Libraries opened with levy funding. The levy took a break from 2012 to 2016, while city government tried to maintain library services through the general fund. After operating for a time with reduced funding, the levy returned to voters in 2016. The 2016 and 2020 levies included expanded hours, increased programs and services, and restored purchasing of materials to fiscal year 2009 levels.

The amount of the levy has not increased in 20 years.

In 2023, to address a budget shortfall, the City reduced general funds for the library by 15%. In 2024, funding was further reduced, eliminating 1.5 FTE and reducing hours. To maintain services and programs, zero dollars were earmarked for purchases of materials, including physical books and periodicals, database subscriptions, The Library of Things, DVDs, streaming services, e-books, children's materials, and more, in the next annual budget.

Proposal

The City of Eugene is requesting voters to approve a local option levy with an increase of \$0.04 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation for the library. Unlike past levies, this one will comprise almost a quarter of the library's budget.

This measure would enable the library to maintain its current level of services. The levy supports access to books, media, and digital resources for all community members. Levy

funding would help expand programs and improve services, including restoring Storytime-to-Go, adding an Early Literacy Children's Librarian, and adding updated and improved materials for youth ages 0-5.

The levy will also add two self-service, automated kiosks used for browsing, checking out, and returning materials. The library plans to place one kiosk in the Churchill area and, based on that experience, will determine the location of the second kiosk. Kiosks are a more economical way of providing library services than brick and mortar buildings.

Supporters Say

- Libraries are considered essential public services, providing public computer access, early literacy, and free, enriching programs for all ages, ensuring inclusive and equitable access to information for all residents.
- The emphasis on the early childhood introduction to books could raise our low test scores in reading.
- The convenience of the kiosks will increase access to books.

Note: There is no organized opposition to this measure.