

C-PAC—the political arm of the Stuart/Martin County Chamber of Commerce—as well as our Board of Directors and our Local Government Affairs Committee, has carefully reviewed the half-cent sales tax to increase funding for Martin County School District's capital needs. We strongly support it and encourage you to do the same on your Nov. 6 ballot.

**Why it's important:** The half-cent sales tax will generate:

- \$15 million for additional security hardening features—which were recently identified by experts during state-mandated school campus audits—at every school in the district.
- \$64 million to replace both Palm City and Jensen Beach elementary schools, which are 110 years old combined and functionally obsolete.
- Funding to reduce the district's repair and renovation backlog.

**How we got here:** During the recession, the Florida Legislature reduced statewide the level of local tax dollars—by 25 percent—that can go toward capital projects. This resulted in a loss of nearly \$92 million for school capital needs over 10 years, leaving the district with a near-equal-sized backlog.

**Good stewardship:** Meanwhile, the district has remained fiscally conservative, owning debt-free entirely all its capital assets other than Anderson Middle School. Compare that St. Lucie County and Palm Beach County school districts, which pay 30 cents and 60 cents, respectively, of every dollar of state-specified annual income for debt service.

**Length of sales tax:** Seven years—from Jan. 1, 2019 to Dec. 31, 2025.

**Total amount raised:** \$112 million.

**Citizen impact:** For a Martin County family that purchases \$2,000 a month in taxable goods, the additional cost of the half-cent sales tax amounts to \$120 a year.

**Current Martin County tax rate:** We only pay the state sales tax of 6 percent, with no local sales tax.

**What the sale tax doesn't cover:** Medicine and most groceries, as only prepared food items are taxed.

**Impact on large purchases:** Only the first \$5,000 of a purchase are affected, amounting to a total addition of \$25.

**More contributors:** Everyone who purchases taxable goods in Martin County—including year-around and seasonal residents, tourists and out-of-area visitors—pays the sales tax.