

Measure 17-121 Josephine County

Referred to the People by the Josephine County Board of Commissioners

17-121

Veterans Service Office Five Year Local Option Tax

QUESTION: Shall Josephine County levy \$0.05 per \$1,000.00 assessed value for Veterans Service Office operations for five years beginning in 2025? This measure may cause property taxes to increase more than three percent.

SUMMARY: The Josephine County Veterans Service Office is available to support around 9,000 military veterans. The office helps local veterans obtain federal, state and county benefits for which they are eligible. The office also provides veterans outreach services, and helps veterans' families learn about and apply for survivor benefits.

The Veterans Service Office is mostly funded by the County General Fund. Other programs, such as the Sheriff's Office, also receive funds from the General Fund. The Veterans Service Office would receive no General Fund dollars while this five-year local option tax is in effect. The funds raised by this measure would be spent only on operations at the Veterans Service Office and on required administrative expenses.

At \$0.05 per \$1,000, for every \$100,000 of assessed value, the tax would cost \$.42 per month, or \$5 per year. The approximate tax increase for a home valued at the County's average residential assessed value of \$226,030 would be approximately \$11.30 per year.

The proposed rate would raise approximately \$510,000 in fiscal year 2025-2026, \$526,600 in 2026-2027, \$543,700 in 2027-2028, \$561,400 in 2028-2029, and \$579,600 in 2029-2030, for a total of \$2,721,200.

The estimated tax cost for this measure is an ESTIMATE ONLY based on the best information available from the county assessor at the time of the estimate and may reflect the impact of early payment discounts, compression and the collection rate.

Explanatory Statement

Josephine County is home to about 9,000 military veterans. Based on military service, many veterans are eligible for federal, state, and county benefits. Veteran's benefits include, but are not limited to: compensation and pension claims, educational assistance, Defense Finance and Accounting Service (DFAS) payments, job training, medical care, memorial services, social outreach, suicide prevention services, and survivor benefits. Many benefits are also available for the immediate family members of veterans.

The Josephine County Veterans Service Office is located at the county courthouse. The office currently includes three certified Veterans Service Officers who handle claims for military veterans and their families. A recently passed federal law – the PACT Act – is one factor that has increased the office's number of claims in recent years. In Fiscal Year 2021-22, the office worked with 1,845 local veterans and handled 4,933 calls. In Fiscal Year 2022-23, the office worked with 2,656 local veterans and handled 5,492 calls.

In Fiscal Year 2021-22, compensation and pension claims awarded to veterans residing in Josephine County increased by about \$7,000,000.00, resulting in a total federal payments of \$65,272,000.00. In Fiscal Year 2022-23, Josephine County veterans receive about \$77,277,000.00 in federal compensation payments, which was about \$12,000,000.00 more than the prior year. The Veterans Service Office helped local veterans obtain the overall increase in compensation payments. None of the compensation payments made to veterans are used to fund the County Veterans Service Office.

Like the Sheriff's Office and several other county programs, the Veterans Service Office depends on the County General Fund in order to continue operating. Funds from this levy would fund the Veterans Service Office, and would remove the need to pay for the program out of the County General Fund. Funds from this levy would be used only for the Veterans Service Office, including the program's required payments to the county's Internal Service Fund in exchange for administrative support. As with all county funds, these funds would undergo annual, independent audits.

This new levy would increase property taxes by \$0.05 per \$1,000.00 of assessed value, and would be in effect for five years.

(This information furnished by the Josephine County Board of Commissioners.)

Measure 17-121 Arguments

Argument in Opposition

As an honorably discharged Veteran of the U.S. Army, it is my personal belief that this proposal for a tax levy is designed to "strum the heart strings" of those wishing to see Veterans needs taken care of via Veterans Service Office.

Though I deeply and sincerely appreciate the good intentions of providing for the needs of Veterans (and there are many needs). I do not believe the burden of financial provision should fall upon the shoulders of countywide property owners by an increase in their already too high demand for taxes.

Veterans should not be exploited for the benefit of greedy bureaucrats who stand to profit by this proposal.

I'm willing to bet that the annual income of those hired to provide these "Services" to Veterans far exceed any income being gained by the Veterans they claim to serve.

The Federal Government - who hired and trained the Veterans should carry the financial burden of providing for their needs and services - NOT county property owners that are already over taxed on MANY levels! VOTE NO on measure 17-121.

John Harding, O'Brien

(This information furnished by John Harding.)

"Measure arguments are printed as submitted. The printing of this argument does not constitute an endorsement by Josephine County, nor does the county warrant the accuracy or truth of any statements made in the argument."