

JANUARY 24, 2020 | NEWS

DeLeo Leads Campaign for Sarasota County School Tax Referendum

SARASOTA, FL – Dan J. DeLeo, a partner in Shumaker’s Sarasota office, is campaigning for renewal of the 1-mill tax referendum for Sarasota County schools, which will be decided by voters in a special election on March 20. Not only is he in favor of the referendum, DeLeo is president of Citizens for Better Schools (CBS), the political committee that has been in existence since the tax’s initial vote. CBS is a grassroots volunteer organization of community business people, leaders in the arts, concerned citizens, parents and teachers.

The non-partisan, local-option property tax has been in effect since 2002 and must be renewed every four years. Since it is already in effect, renewal does not increase taxes and only continues what is currently paid. The 1-mill supplies the school district with \$56 million a year, and now makes up 13% of the schools’ operating budget.

“This funding is critical,” said DeLeo, “The 1-mill is a major reason why the Sarasota school district has been A-rated since 2004, one of only two districts in the state. The additional funding allows us to continue to offer art, drama, music, and other performing arts programs.”

In addition, money from the mill supports an additional 30 minutes in the school day, which is equivalent to 18 additional days in the school year. DeLeo stresses that the extra time is an essential part of the district’s ability to improve student achievement.

In 2014, the funding was approved by voters by 77%, but DeLeo emphasizes that voters should not be complacent. “We need the community’s support – even residents who don’t have children in the school system. By improving the school district, the entire economic landscape of Sarasota is enhanced. People want to live in a city with great schools and, in turn, property values increase.”

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Daniel J. DeLeo

MEDIA CONTACT

Wendy M. Byrne
wbyrne@shumaker.com

DeLeo has served on the school board's Financial Advisory Committee for over a decade, and has been actively involved in education initiatives. He has two children in Sarasota public schools and many family members who were teachers, including his father.

Registered voters in Sarasota County who will be age 18 or older on or before Tuesday, March 20, are eligible to vote in the special election.

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Founded in 1925, Shumaker, Loop & Kendrick, LLP, is a full-service law firm with more than 265 lawyers and seven offices in Toledo and Columbus, Ohio; Tampa and Sarasota, Florida; Charleston, South Carolina; Charlotte, North Carolina and Bloomfield Hills, Michigan. Shumaker is a premier provider of quality legal services. Whether it's commitment to clients or work in the community, involvement lies at the core of all of Shumaker's initiatives.