

Three college bond measures focus on vets



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Southwestern College officials said, if passed, money from Measure Z will be used to fund completion of the Performing Arts and Cultural Center, seen here in an artist's rendering. *Southwestern College*

With an eye on supporting veterans getting back into the civilian workforce, three community college districts will ask voters in November to approve facilities bond measures that total \$1.2 billion.

The Southwestern, Grossmont-Cuyamaca and MiraCosta community college districts have each put similar-sounding initiatives on the Nov. 8 ballot that ask voters to OK financing to pay for repairs, upgrades and construction to campuses in South, East and North County — all in an effort to increase opportunities for those who have served the country.

Bond measure approval includes a set of local controls, including annual audits and the creation of independent citizens' oversight committees in each district to watch spending and ensure voters get what they paid for. Each measure needs 55 percent of the vote to pass.

Southwestern bond proposal

South County voters will be asked to authorize Measure Z, a \$400 million proposition called the "Southwestern College Affordable Education, Job Training/Veteran Support Measure." District officials say the bond money will be used to fund repairs and upgrades to the college's infrastructure and technology, and create job training and transfer opportunities for students and veterans — as well as fund completion of a Performing Arts and Cultural Center.

A poll commissioned last spring by Southwestern surveyed 600 district voters who are likely to cast ballots in November's election. Of those surveyed, 70 percent said they would approve bond money that would be used to repair and upgrade the college's campuses to prepare students and veterans for jobs and university transfer.

If passed, the tax rate levied will be no more than \$25 per \$100,000 of assessed property value.

Southwestern serves about 19,000 students at its Chula Vista campus and higher education centers in San Ysidro, Otay Mesa and National City.

Grossmont/Cuyamaca bond proposal

On the ballot in the East County, voters will consider Measure X, a \$348 million measure called the "East County/Grossmont/Cuyamaca Community Colleges Affordable College, Job Training, Campus Repair, Veteran Support Measure." School officials said the funds will be used to build a regional workforce training center, provide training and education to veterans re-entering the civilian workforce, and replace outdated classroom buildings and other facilities.

"The polling results showed supporting veterans is very import to our constituents," said Anne Krueger, the college district's spokeswoman. A poll of East County potential voters found 80 percent of those polled said it was very important to support education for veterans.

"Our colleges do a lot for veterans," Krueger said. "We have resource centers, veterans get high priority with registration and we have counselors devoted to helping veterans. But we would like to have better facilities to serve veterans —and all our students."

The district's 2015-16 assessed valuation is \$43.1 billion, which is up 5.35 percent over the previous year. If approved, the maximum amount of tax levied will be no more than \$25 per \$100,000 of assessed property value.

The district serves about 28,000 students at Grossmont College in El Cajon and Cuyamaca College in Rancho San Diego. It has about \$350 million of unfunded capital needs.

MiraCosta bond proposal

Voters in the MiraCosta Community College District in coastal North County will be asked to give their approval to Measure MM, a \$455 million initiative called the "MiraCosta College Job Training, College Transfer, Veteran Support Measure."

The district tried to pass a similar initiative four years ago, but came up short. Proposition EE, a \$497 million bond measure to upgrade facilities and technology to better serve students, active military and war veterans, received just 54.84 percent of the vote. It needed 55 percent.

If passed, the maximum amount of tax levied to property taxes within the district's boundaries would be \$14.99 per \$100,000 of assessed value.

Measure MM has been endorsed by the San Diego County Taxpayers Association, Bloom said.

MiraCosta serves about 15,000 students. About 1,800 of those enrolled are veterans, active duty and military students. The college also offers non-credit classes that more than 6,000 students are taking advantage of this semester, Bloom said.

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