



Analysis of Property Tax Levies for Library Purposes

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Prepared by
Howard Fleeter & Associates
60 East Broad Street, Suite 350
Columbus, Ohio 43215

I. Overview

This paper summarizes the results of proposed library property tax levies over the period from 1980 through 2017. This version of the report updates the prior March 2013 report by including the results from 172 library levies placed on the ballot from 2013 through 2017. The report analyzes the relationship between the result of library tax proposals (pass or fail) and the characteristics of the levy proposed or of the library itself.

The analysis looked at Levy Variables and Library Variables. A list of the variables within each type appears here.

A. Levy Variables

1) Levy Purpose – Indicates whether the library levy was a general purpose operating levy, a permanent improvement levy, or a bond levy.

2) Levy Type – Indicates the kind of tax proposed by the levy:

- a) New or Additional – A property tax not previously levied in the library district where the proposed levy appeared on the ballot or an increase in an existing tax. Generally, "new" levies include proposals to issue bonds for capital improvements or construction.
- b) Renewal – The library sought voter approval for a continuation of a property tax already levied by the library for a specified term.
- c) Replacement – This kind of tax levy has the effect of renewing an existing tax, except that the renewal also includes a “resetting” H.B. 920 tax reduction percentage so that the resulting tax “replaces” the tax formerly levied at the original effective rate charged by the replaced tax rather than at the effective rate to which tax reduction factor percentages had reduced the original tax. A replacement levy generally results in a net increase in real property taxes with no effect on personal property taxes.
- d) Reduction – A library district proposes to reduce an existing tax. It is often proposed as a renewal of an existing levy at a lower millage rate.
- e) Renewal and Additional – A library district proposed a renewal of an existing tax and the augmentation of the renewed tax with some additional taxes.
- f) Replacement and Additional – A library district proposed a replacement of an existing tax and the augmentation of the replaced tax with additional taxes.
- g) Combination – Ohio Library Council (OLC) historical levy data also includes a reference to a “combination” levy. It is not exactly clear what this means, although it is most likely a levy for both operating and construction purposes.
- h) Unknown – Information about two proposed levies included no characterization of the levy’s type.

3) Election – Indicates whether the proposed levy appeared on the ballot at the primary election, the general election in November, or at a special election in February or August. During the period covered by this analysis, Ohio held primary elections as early

as March and as late as June. Note also that the general assembly eliminated the February special election effective in 2016.

4) Year – Indicates the calendar year in which a levy appeared on the ballot.

5) Election year type - Indicates whether a proposed levy appeared on the ballot in a Presidential election year, a gubernatorial election year, or in one of the elections during an odd-number year coded as "local" election years.

B. Library Variables

1) County size – This variable indicates the population range in the county in which library districts with a proposed levy were primarily or entirely located.

2) Library size – This variable indicates the size of the library in terms of the population in the library's service area as reported by the State Library of Ohio in its annual statistical report about Ohio libraries for 2009.

3) Region – This variable locates each library district in one of six geographical regions in the state.

II. 2013 – 2017 Library Levy Overview

Library levy activity over the past 5 years can be summarized as follows:

Operating vs. Bond Levies

- There were 172 library levies on the ballot from May 2013 through November 2017. 162 (94.2%) of these levies passed.
- 165 of the 172 library levies on the ballot since May 2013 were general operating levies. 158 (95.8%) of these levies passed.
- There were 4 bond levies on the ballot since May 2013, 3 of which passed (75%). There were also 2 permanent improvement levies on the ballot. Both of these failed. There was also one levy for both operating and construction purposes (it passed).
- 17 libraries were on the ballot for the first time. 12 of these libraries were very small (serving fewer than 10,000 persons). 2 were small (10,000-25,000) and 3 were medium sized (serving 25,000-75,000 persons).

By Election

- 127 of the 172 library levies on the ballot in the past 5 years were on the ballot in November general elections. 45 library levies were on the ballot in March or May primary elections in the past 5 years. 93.3% of library levies on the ballot in primary elections passed, while 94.5% of library levies on the ballot in November general elections were approved by voters.

New vs. Renewal & Replacement Levies

- 43 of the 172 library levies on the ballot in the past 5 years were new levies. 36 (83.7%) of these levies passed. 37 new levies were for operating purposes, 33 of which (89.2%) were approved by voters.
- 129 of the 172 library levies on the ballot in the past 5 years were renewal or replacement levies. 126 (97.7%) of these levies were approved by voters.
- 13 out of 14 (92.9%) of library replacement levies passed over the past 5 years.
- 113 out of 115 (98.3%) of library renewal levies passed over the past 5 years.

Continuing Levies vs. Fixed-Period-of-Time Levies

- 137 of the 172 library levies on the ballot over the past 5 years were for a fixed period of time of 10 years or less. 131 (95.6%) of these levies were approved by voters. 122 of these levies were for 5 years, 2 levies were for less than 5 years and 13 levies were for a length between 6 and 10 years. All of these levies were for general operating purposes.
- 7 library levies on the ballot over the past years were for a length of 15 years or more. 4 of these levies were bond issues, 2 were for permanent improvements and 1 was for a combination of operating expenses and construction expenses. 4 of these levies (57.1%) were approved by voters.
- 28 of the 172 library levies on the ballot the past 5 years were for a continuing period of time. 27 of these levies (96.4%) were approved by voters. All of these levies were for general operating purposes.

Millage Rate

- The average millage rate of library levies from 2013 through 2017 was 1.39 mills.
- The average millage rate of the 7 bond, permanent improvement and combination operating and construction levies was 0.92 mills.
- The average millage rate of continuing operating levies was 1.63 mills and for fixed-period-of-time library levies was 1.36 mills.

Passage Rate

- The average passage rate for the 150 library levies on the ballot from May 2013 through May 2017 was 66.1%. (Note that final vote counts for 22 levies on the ballot in November 2017 were not available at the time this report was prepared.)
- Library levies on the ballot in the March and May primary elections had an average approval rate of 68.2%. This rate was slightly higher than the 65.1% approval rate for library levies on the ballot in the November general election over this same time frame.

III. Results and Analysis: Levy Variables

Results of tax proposals will be analyzed first in terms of variables related to the levy itself and then in terms of variables associated with the library for which the tax was proposed.

Ohio libraries proposed 969 tax levies between 1980 and November 2017. Table 1 shows a simple breakdown of the outcome of these proposals.

Table 1: Outcome of Proposed Property Tax Levies for Bond Levies and General (Operating) Levies for Library Purposes, 1980 – 2017

Levy Type	# Pass	# Fail	Total #	Percent Passed
Bond Levy	105	61	166	63.3%
Permanent Improvement	0	2	2	0.0%
General Operating Levy	648	153	801	80.9%
Total	753	216	969	77.7%

Roughly, four of every five general purpose (or operating) levies passed, and just under two of three bond levies passed. Thus, the success rate for bond levy proposals was somewhat less than the success rate for operating levies, although both purposes achieved relatively high rates of success. In addition, 2 permanent improvement levies were on the ballot (one in 2015 and one in 2106). Both of these levies failed.

Table 2 categorizes proposed tax levies in terms of whether the proposal would impose a new tax or renew or replace a tax already approved at some earlier election. When voters originally approve a levy for a term of years, a renewal levy extends the tax for an additional period of time. In the case of renewed levies, any tax reduction accumulated for that levy up to the time of its renewal becomes the starting point for future reduction.

In the case of a replacement levy, an existing tax levy for a term of years or an existing continuing levy receives voter approval by which the levy's accumulated tax reduction is erased. Therefore, a replacement levy has the effect of causing an increase in taxes actually charged against real property although it does not place a new tax on the tax list. ("Tax Reduction" refers to the percentage reduction in taxes implemented to offset the effects of reappraisals. Sometimes, this reduction is referred to as the H.B. 920 reduction.)

Libraries also may propose to renew or replace an existing tax levy and, at the same time, request voter approval for additional taxes. Results related to those combined levies appear in the rows "Renewal + Additional" and "Replacement + Additional."

Table 2: Outcome of Proposed Property Tax Levies for Library Purposes by Type of Levy Proposal, 1980 – 2017

Levy Type	# Pass	# Fail	Total #	Percent Passed
New	355	185	540	65.7%
Renewal	233	9	242	96.3%
Renewal +Additional	29	0	29	100.0%
Replacement	102	15	117	87.2%
Replacement + Additional	29	7	36	80.6%
Reduction	2	0	2	100.0%
Combination	1	0	1	100.0%
Unknown	2	0	2	100.0%
Total	753	216	969	77.7%

The data on Table 2 show that library renewal levies pass over 96% of the time, while replacement levies of existing taxes pass over 87% of the time. New library levies are less successful than renewal and replacement levies, but still pass nearly 2/3rd of the time (66%).

Table 3 classifies the proposed levies according to the type of election at which the proposal appeared on the ballot.

Table 3: Outcome of Proposed Tax Levies for Library Purposes by Type of Election, 1980 – 2017

	# Pass	# Fail	Total #	Percent Passed
General Election (November)	455	122	577	78.9%
Primary Election (March, May, or June)	284	90	374	75.9%
Special Election (February or August)	14	4	18	77.8%
Total	753	216	969	77.7%

The table shows that the chances of success were slightly better (by three percentage points) at the November General election than at the Primary election. Library levies only appeared a relatively few times at Special election ballots, but the success rate at the special elections was slightly higher than at general and primary elections. This finding is in contrast to that for school levies which are much less likely to pass at Special elections than they are at General or Primary elections. Since the number of special election proposals involving library levies was so small, February and August special elections were not separately shown.

Note that technically, election law treats primary elections as "special elections" for some purposes. While this treatment may have validity for purposes of administering the elections system, from the perspective of data analysis, library levy activity at primary elections clearly differs from the amount of such activity at February and August elections. This practical difference justifies the breakdown into the categories shown on Table 3.

Table 4 classifies the outcome of library tax proposals in terms of the percentage of voters who voted FOR the levy.

Table 4: Number of Levies Classified According to the Percentage of Voters Who Voted For the Proposal, 1980 – 2017

Percent For the Proposed Levy	Levy Passed	Levy Failed	% of All Proposed Levies
More than 24% but less than 30%		8	0.8%
At least 30% but less than 40%		36	3.8%
At least 40% but less than 45%		57	6.0%
At least 45% but less than 49%		90	9.5%
Between 49% and 51%	34	22	5.9%
At least 51% but less than 55%	112		11.8%
At least 55% but less than 60%	159		16.8%
At least 60% but less than 70%	241		25.4%
70% or more	170		18.0%
Unknown	15	3	1.9%
Total*	731	216	100.0%

* Totals do not include the 22 library levies in November 2017 for which final vote counts were not available at the time this report was written.

For example, the first row on the table shows that eight proposed levies failed to obtain a 30% favorable vote. In other words, fewer than 30% of the voters voting at the election cast their ballot in favor of the proposed library tax levy. The last column on the table shows that these levy proposals with a fewer than 30% for the levy accounted for 0.8% of all 947 library levies proposed during the period covered by the table. (Note that the totals in the Table 4 do not include the 22 library levies on the ballot in November 2017 because the Ohio Secretary of State has not yet finalized vote counts.)

It is instructive to concentrate on the unsuccessful proposals. The number of unsuccessful levy proposals shown in the last column increases as the percentage of favorable votes increases up to 49%. This shows that more of the unsuccessful levy proposals tended to fail in close races. For example, if a “close race” is defined as any unsuccessful proposal where the percentage of favorable votes ranged between 45% and 50%, then more than half of all unsuccessful levy proposals involved a “close race.” From 2013 through 2017, 7 of the 10 unsuccessful library levies had more than 46% voter approval, with 40.9% being the lowest level of voter support received in the past five years.

Of the successful levies, 146 passed in “close races” when that term is defined as a favorable vote between 50% and 55%. It was far more common for a levy to pass by a large percentage than it was for a levy to fail by a large percentage. For example, 570

levies received at least 55% approval from the voters. These elections in which the library's proposed tax levy passed with a vote which was not "close" accounted for 60.2% of all levy proposals.

Table 5 shows the outcome of library levy proposals listed by year from 1980 through 2017. The last column, called "Type of Ballot," identifies the years in which the race for President of the United States or for Governor of Ohio headed the ballot.

Table 5: Results of Levies Proposed for Library Purposes by Year, 1980 – 2017

Year	# Pass	# Fail	Total	% Passed	Type of Ballot Year
1980	7	3	10	70.0%	Presidential
1981	15	3	18	83.3%	Local
1982	7	6	13	53.9%	Gubernatorial
1983	8	5	13	61.5%	Local
1984	17	12	29	58.6%	Presidential
1985	10	9	19	52.6%	Local
1986	23	3	26	88.5%	Gubernatorial
1987	12	4	16	75.0%	Local
1988	14	6	20	70.0%	Presidential
1989	14	2	16	87.5%	Local
1990	13	2	15	86.7%	Gubernatorial
1991	18	5	23	78.3%	Local
1992	20	6	26	76.9%	Presidential
1993	15	13	28	53.6%	Local

Table 5 Continued: Results of Levies Proposed for Library Purposes, 1980 – 2017

Year	# Pass	# Fail	Total	% Passed	Type of Ballot Year
1994	10	4	14	71.4%	Gubernatorial
1995	16	1	17	94.1%	Local
1996	16	7	23	69.6%	Presidential
1997	23	8	31	74.2%	Local
1998	13	6	19	68.4%	Gubernatorial
1999	9	4	13	69.2%	Local
2000	15	5	20	75.0%	Presidential
2001	18	6	24	75.0%	Local
2002	17	4	21	81.0%	Gubernatorial
2003	16	10	26	61.5%	Local
2004	15	8	23	65.2%	Presidential
2005	16	6	22	72.7%	Local
2006	12	9	21	57.1%	Gubernatorial
2007	24	9	33	72.7%	Local
2008	25	5	30	83.3%	Presidential
2009	35	10	45	77.8%	Local
2010	56	15	71	78.9%	Gubernatorial
2011	36	7	43	83.7%	Local
2012	26	3	29	89.7%	Presidential
2013	32	1	33	97.0%	Local
2014	39	4	43	90.7%	Gubernatorial
2015	38	3	41	92.7%	Local
2016	28	2	30	93.3%	Presidential
2017	25	0	25	100.0%	Local
Total	753	216	969	77.7%	

Table 5 shows some dramatic changes in the frequency of library levy proposals in recent years. Between 1980 and 2006, the number of levy proposals in any single year equaled 30 or more only once (in 1997). From 2007 to 2017, the number of library proposals equaled or exceeded 30 in 9 of 11 eleven years, with the exceptions being 29 levies on the ballot in 2012 and 25 on the ballot in 2017.

Table 5 covers a span of 38 years. The 423 levy proposals in the last eleven of those 38 years account for 43.7% - approaching one half - of all levy activity over the entire period. The total number of levies in 2010 alone equaled more than twice the annual levy activity in every year from 1980 through 2008.

Finally, while the number of issues on the ballot increased, the success rate in the recent period of increased ballot activity by libraries actually improved. From 1980 through 2006, libraries passed 71.25% of the 546 levies proposed in that period. In the last eleven years - 2007 through 2017 - the success rate for library levy proposals improved to 86.1% (364 of 423 library levies passed).

Table 6 combines the results in Table 5 to show the outcome by type of election ballot.

Table 6: Summary of Library Levy Outcomes Classified According to the Type of Ballot for the Year in Which the Levy Proposal Appeared on the Ballot, 1980 – 2017

Type of Ballot Year	# Pass	# Fail	Total #	Percent Passed
Presidential	183	57	240	76.3%
Gubernatorial	190	53	243	78.2%
Local	380	106	486	76.6%
Total	753	206	969	77.7%

Table 6 suggests that the type of election year makes little difference to the likelihood of success for library levies. While library levies achieved a slightly lower success rate in Presidential and Local election years, the difference between the rate in those years and the success rate in gubernatorial election years is less than 2 percentage points.

Table 7 shows the results of library levy proposals classified according to the size of the tax levy involved. For example, of 88 tax levy proposals involving a tax of less than one half of one mill, 68 passed and 20 failed for an approval rate of 77.3%. The most commonly proposed levy amount was one mill. Libraries have proposed a one mill rate 244 times since 1980. The approval rate of these 1 mill levies equaled 82.4%. The lowest approval rate of 65.3% occurred in the case of levy proposals between 1.51 and 2.0 mills. Additionally, levy proposals between 2 and 3 mills have the second lowest approval rate at 69.9%. Interestingly, levy proposals of 3 mills or greater pass at the highest rate, although there have only been 36 levies of this size over the 38 year time frame of this analysis.

Table 7: Results of Levy Proposals for Library Purposes by Size of Tax Levy Proposed, 1980 – 2017

Number of Mills	# Pass	# Fail	Total	Percent Passed
Unknown	7	0	7	100.0%
< 0.5 Mills	68	20	88	77.3%
0.5 to 0.99	220	58	278	79.1%
1 mill	201	43	244	82.4%
1.01 to 1.5	106	35	141	75.2%
1.51 to 1.99	47	25	72	65.3%
2 to 2.99	72	31	103	69.9%
3 to 3.99	17	3	20	85.0%
4 to 4.99	9	1	10	90.0%
5 or more	6	0	6	100.0%
Total	753	216	969	77.7%

Table 8 shows the outcome of proposed tax levies when the levies are classified according to the number of years over which the levy will apply. Short term levies of five or fewer years in duration have a higher success rate (82.7%) than taxes proposed for a longer term. However, the 81.7% success rate for continuing levies comes quite close to the success rate of levies that are 5 years or less in duration. A continuing levy has no termination date. Most proposed levies with a term of more than 15-20 years were bond issues.

Table 8: Results of Levy Proposals for Library Purposes by Term of Years for Proposed Tax Levy, 1980 – 2017

Levy Term	# Pass	# Fail	Total	Percent Passed
5 years or fewer	508	106	614	82.7%
6 to 10 years	51	19	70	72.9%
11 to 15 years	8	11	19	42.1%
16 to 20 years	48	25	73	65.8%
21 years or more	33	30	63	52.4%
Continuing	94	21	115	81.7%
Unknown	11	4	15	73.3%
Total	753	216	969	77.7%

IV. Results and Analysis: Library Variables

This section of the report analyses the outcome of tax levy proposals for library purposes based on characteristics associated with the library rather than the details of the levy proposal.

Table 9: Results of Levy Proposals by Size of the County in Which the Library District Proposing the Levy Is Located, 1980 – 2017

County Size	# Pass	# Fail	Total	Percent Passed	County Population	Number of Counties
Very Large	110	17	127	86.6%	800,000 and up	3 (3)
Large	215	56	271	79.3%	200,000 - 800,000	10 (10)
Medium	158	55	213	74.2%	100,000 – 200,000	15 (15)
Small	113	24	137	82.5%	50,000 - 100,000	18 (20)
Very Small	157	64	221	71.0%	Less than 50,000	34 (40)
Total	753	216	969	77.7%		80 (88)

Table 9 shows the outcome of levy proposal elections based on the size of the county in which the library district is located. For example, the table shows that 127 proposals appeared on the ballot in Very Large counties of which 110 passed and only 17 failed for a passage rate of 86.6%. The population of Very Large counties ranges from 800,000 up to about 1.4 million. Population data come from Census Bureau estimates for 2008 and have been periodically updated. The final column of the table shows the number of counties in which a library levy proposal appeared on the ballot at some time over the 1980 – 2017 period. The second number in parentheses in that column shows the total number of counties in each population category regardless of whether a levy proposal appeared on a county's ballot. For example, the fourth row shows that the 113 proposals in Small counties appeared on the ballot in 18 counties. The number "20" in parentheses shows that Ohio actually contains twenty Small counties. Similarly, Ohio has 40 Very Small counties, but library levy proposals appeared on the ballots of only 34 of these counties.

Tables 10A and 10B show the results of proposed library levies classified according to the size of the library. The size of a library depends upon the population of the library's service area as reported in the State Library of Ohio's Annual Report for 2009 and has been periodically updated.

Table 10A shows the results for levies on the ballot in the last 5 years by size of library. In the past 5 years, library levies passed with at least an 88% rate for all sizes of libraries. 17 libraries went on the ballot in the five year period from 2013-2017 that had never been on the ballot before. 3 of these were Medium sized libraries, 2 were Small libraries, and 12 were Very Small libraries. As of November 2017, 8 counties have never had a library levy on the ballot: Carroll, Fayette, Highland, Hocking, Jackson, Lawrence, Marion and Noble.

Table 10A: Results of Levy Proposals by Size of the Library District Proposing the Levy, 2013 – 2017

Library Size	# Pass	# Fail	Total	Percent Passed	Population of Service Area	# Libraries 1 st Time on Ballot
VL	6	0	6	100.0%	More than 200,000	
L	15	2	17	88.2%	75,000 to 200,000	
M	45	0	45	100.0%	25,000 to 75,000	3
S	41	5	46	89.1%	10,000 to 25,000	2
VS	55	3	58	94.8%	0 to 10,000	12
Total	162	10	172	94.2%		17

Table 10B provides an overview of library levy results by size of library from 1980 through 2017. For example, the state of Ohio has 67 Medium sized library districts with a population in the district's service area between 25,000 to 75,000 persons. Of these 67 Medium libraries, 58 proposed at least one tax levy between 1980 and 2017. The total number of levy proposals in Medium sized libraries equaled 284. Of that total 209 passed and 75 failed for a success rate of 73.6%. Therefore, Medium-sized library districts succeeded with their levy proposals slightly less often than the 77.7% average success rate for all libraries would predict. Very Large libraries had the highest percentage of success at the ballot, while Large libraries had the lowest percentage.

Table 10B: Results of Levy Proposals by Size of the Library District Proposing the Levy, 1980 – 2017

Library Size	# Pass	# Fail	Total	Percent Passed	Population of Service Area	Number of Library Districts
VL	67	10	77	87.0%	More than 200,000	9 (9)
L	99	42	141	70.2%	75,000 to 200,000	20 (21)
M	209	75	284	73.6%	25,000 to 75,000	58 (67)
S	192	49	241	79.7%	10,000 to 25,000	58 (66)
VS	186	40	226	82.3%	0 to 10,000	71 (88)
Total	753	216	969	77.7%		216 (251)

The last column in Table 10B shows the number of library districts in each class size. The first number without parentheses shows the total number of districts in which the library proposed at least one tax levy during the period covered here. The parenthesized number shows the total number of libraries in each size classification regardless of whether the library proposed a tax levy. Note that ***these figures show the number of libraries that have placed levies on the ballot, not the number of districts that have successfully passed library levies.*** Table 10 shows that 216 of Ohio's libraries have attempted to pass at least one property tax levy, while OLC's data shows that 197 of the state's 251 libraries currently have property tax levies in place (as of the November 2017 election).

Tables 11A and 11B show the results of library levies according to location in 6 geographical regions of the state. These 6 regions resemble - but are not identical to - OLC's membership regions. Appendix A lists the counties assigned to each region.

Table 11A: Results of Levy Proposals by the Geographic Region of the Library District Proposing the Levy, 2013 – 2017

Region	# Pass	# Fail	Total	% Passed	Number of Counties	Number of Libraries
1. Northwest	48	2	50	96.0%	22	68
2. West	16	2	18	88.9%	9	27
3. Southwest	7	0	7	100.0%	7	13
4. Southeast	16	0	16	100.0%	18	24
5. Northeast	56	5	61	91.8%	17	79
6. Central	19	1	20	95.0%	15	40
Total	162	10	172	94.2%	88	251

Table 11A provides a summary of library levies on the ballot over the past 5 years by region of the state, while Table 11B shows the same summary from 1980 through 2017.

Table 11B: Results of Levy Proposals by the Geographic Region of the Library District Proposing the Levy, 1980 – 2017

Region	# Pass	# Fail	Total	% Passed	Number of Counties	Number of Districts
1. Northwest	187	31	218	85.8%	22	59 (68)
2. West	67	18	85	78.8%	9	24 (27)
3. Southwest	26	8	34	76.5%	7	11 (13)
4. Southeast	40	12	52	76.9%	18	17 (24)
5. Northeast	347	101	448	77.5%	17	73 (79)
6. Central	86	46	132	65.2%	15	32 (40)
Total	753	216	969	77.7%	88	216 (251)

For example, Table 11B shows that libraries in Northwest Ohio's counties submitted 218 library tax proposals. Of these proposals, 187 succeeded and 31 failed an 85.8% passage rate. The number of counties in the Northwest Ohio region is 22, although library tax proposals did not necessarily appear on the ballot in all of those counties. Northwest Ohio has 68 library districts, as shown by the number in parentheses in the last column. 59 of these libraries submitted levy proposals during the period covered by this analysis.

Table 11B also shows that Northwest Ohio library districts are the most successful at the ballot, exceeding the State average passage rate by more than 8 percentage points while Central Ohio libraries are the least successful (12.5 points below the statewide rate). The success rate in the West region was slightly above the statewide average, while the passage rates of libraries in the Southwest, Southeast, and Northeast region of the state were all slightly below the statewide average.

Every region of the state has library districts that have not placed a levy on the ballot since 1980. Overall 216 of the 251 library districts (86%) across the state have attempted to pass a levy from 1980-2017.

V. Conclusion

From 1980 through 2017 proposed library levies have a high success rate of over 77%.

General purpose levies have a significantly higher (17.6 percentage points) success rate than do bond levies. Renewal and replacement levies also have significantly higher success rates than new levies or renewal plus additional levies. Data show that a levy proposal has almost an equal chance of success at the primary or the general election. Library levies submitted at special elections (of which there have been few the past 10 years) have a similar higher success rate.

Table 4 shows that more than half of all unsuccessful levy proposals come within 5% of passing. This means that even in unsuccessful attempts to pass a library levy, the library district often comes reasonably close to success. On the other hand, nearly 80% of successful levy proposals (570 of 731) obtain a favorable vote of 55% or better. Thus, when libraries do well in a tax levy election, they tend to do very well. If “close races” are defined as those elections where the proposed tax achieves a vote for the levy equal 45% to 54% of the votes cast, the libraries succeed in more close races than those in which they fail (146 succeeded vs. 112 failed).

Medium and Very Small *counties* have a relatively harder time obtaining voter approval for proposed tax levies. Very Small *library districts* do not have the same difficulty.

The geographic analysis of library levy proposals shows that libraries in the northern half of the state have better than average success. Southern and Central Ohio libraries fall short of the state average.

However, the most dramatic data in the entire report appears in Table 5 which shows that the frequency with which Ohio libraries have placed property tax levies on the ballot has increased markedly since 2007. 43.7% (423 of 969) of all levy proposals since 1980 appeared on the ballot in the eleven years from 2007 through 2017. Furthermore, 2007 through 2016 comprise 9 of the top 10 years for the number of libraries on the ballot in Ohio, with the record of 71 levies set in 2010.

Finally, the large amount of library levies on the ballot since 2007 has actually resulted in an increase in the statewide passage rate.

APPENDIX A: Ohio Libraries by Region

Below is a list of the counties that comprise each of the 6 regions used for the purposes of this analysis of library levies in Ohio. The 8 counties shown in **red** font are those that have never had a library levy on the ballot.

Region 1 Northwest (22 Counties): Allen, Auglaize, Crawford, Defiance, Erie, Fulton, Hancock, Hardin, Henry, Huron, Lucas, Mercer, Ottawa, Paulding, Putnam, Richland, Sandusky, Seneca, Van Wert, Williams, Wood, Wyandot

Region 2 West (9 Counties): Champaign, Clark, Clinton, Darke, Greene, Miami, Montgomery, Preble, Shelby

Region 3 Southwest (7 Counties): Adams, Brown, Butler, Clermont, Hamilton, **Highland**, Warren

Region 4 Southeast (18 Counties): Athens, Belmont, Coshocton, Gallia, Guernsey, Harrison, **Jackson**, Jefferson, **Lawrence**, Meigs, Monroe, Morgan, Muskingum, **Noble**, Pike, Scioto, Vinton, Washington

Region 5 Northeast (17 Counties): Ashland, Ashtabula, **Carroll**, Columbiana, Cuyahoga, Geauga, Holmes, Lake, Lorain, Mahoning, Medina, Portage, Stark, Summit, Trumbull, Tuscarawas, Wayne

Region 6 Central (15 Counties): Delaware, Fairfield, **Fayette**, Franklin, **Hocking**, Knox, Licking, Logan, Madison, **Marion**, Morrow, Perry, Pickaway, Ross, Union