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**Taxpayers Association Grades the Graders:
Watchdog Org Releases School Bond Transparency Report Card**
Association expresses gratitude to the citizens who do oversight for all of us

San Diego, CA (November 30, 2023) – While students will soon be receiving their grades from teachers before the holidays, the San Diego County Taxpayers Association is handing out grades of their own to the schools themselves. They were graded by the various members of the Association who volunteer their time and talent on bond oversight committees.

Today the SDCTA issued grades for 26 local school districts in its 11th annual School Bond Transparency Report Card.

Over the past decade, this annual report card has encouraged school districts with billions of dollars in public bonds to disclose their performance. Without government transparency, taxpayers have few options to evaluate whether a district is spending funds wisely or potentially hiding waste. The report card has also put a renewed focus on the work of the independent citizens’ oversight committees by factoring their activity into the transparency grades.

“While the Taxpayers Association evaluates a large range of factors when considering support for school bonds, one of the more important ones is the district’s transparency grades on this report card,” said Terry McKearney, chair of SDCTA’s Excellence in Education committee. “The time will eventually come when another school bond is put on the ballot, and when it does, we strongly recommend taxpayers to consider their district’s transparency score as a part of their decision.”

Of the 26 school districts that have active bond programs, the average score, when removing the lowest two outliers, was 90 percent — an “A-” — which represents an increase from an average adjusted score of 87 percent in 2022. Perfect scores were achieved by Chula Vista Elementary School District, Grossmont Union High School District, Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District, MiraCosta Community College District, San Diego Unified School District, and San Ysidro School District.

Failing grades were handed to Borrego Springs Unified School District, Mountain Empire Unified School District, and “D” letter grades were given to Lemon Grove School District, and Sweetwater Union High School District.

Key findings from the new report card include:



- The most improved district was Santee School District with a “B” grade and an increase of 18 points, from 67 percent to 85 percent.
- The second most improved district was Lakeside Union School District with an “A” grade and an increase of 15 points, from 81 percent to 96 percent.
- The largest score drop was Lemon Grove School District with a “D” grade and a fall of 18 points, sliding from 81 percent to 63 percent.

[CLICK HERE to view all of the grades within the 2023 School Bond Transparency Report Card](#)

The report card does not judge the merits of what school districts are spending bond funds on, but rather how transparent they are about their spending. Each school district was graded in 27 categories such as timeliness and ease of access to key reports; the number of vacancies on its independent citizens’ oversight committee; accessibility of meetings and minutes; whether annual financial audits are available and performed by an independent auditor; if performance audits meet SDCTA standards; and detailed lists, descriptions, progress updates, and itemized expenditures for bond-funded projects.

After grading, SDCTA sent school districts their report cards, offering each the chance to respond or send corrections. Grades were finalized one week later.

“We are so grateful to our members who are keeping a watchful eye on how bond monies are spent,” said Haney Hong, president and CEO of SDCTA. “The recent Thanksgiving holiday reminds me that we must acknowledge our members who engage in bond oversight and are committed to their communities and transparency. On behalf of your fellow taxpayers, I thank you for your service.”

SDCTA President and CEO Haney Hong is available to speak with the media. Please email press@sdcta.org to arrange an interview.

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San Diego County Taxpayers Association (SDCTA) is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, dedicated to promoting accountable, cost-effective, and efficient government and opposing unnecessary new taxes and fees. Since 1945, SDCTA has served as “San Diego’s Taxpayer Watchdog Group” by educating the public and helping save the region’s citizens millions of dollars. Public opinion polls consistently rate SDCTA as the most “influential” and “trusted” public policy institution in San Diego. For more information, please visit www.sdcta.org, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, call 619-234-6423, or email info@sdcta.org