

ANSWERING TOUGH QUESTIONS

# PROP 55 EXTENSION

Winning the permanent extension of Proposition 55 is necessary to stop 14.6 billion dollars in cuts to our neighborhood public schools. If these vital funds are cut—every school district across California will lose close to 15% of its budget overnight.

We've set an important goal for our union: 85% of our own members signing onto the petition to get this permanent extension on the ballot in 2026. This is going to take a lot of one-on-one conversations—school site by school site, member to member. In these critical conversations, we must connect the actual cuts to our classrooms and our students, be ready to answer tough questions that come up, and inoculate against misinformation that will come from opponents of school funding.

AAR (Answer, Affirm, Redirect) is a proven method for engaging with folks on the issues while also staying focused on our message and not getting thrown off or bogged down.

## AAR (ANSWER, AFFIRM, REDIRECT)

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- ▶▶▶ **AFFIRM:** Let your fellow union member know you hear them and that their question and feelings are valid. (e.g., "I hear you," or "I understand why you'd feel that way.")
- ▶▶▶ **ANSWER:** Give an honest and concise answer. Don't be evasive. Use the key facts from the campaign. If you don't know the answer, say that and commit to getting back to them.
- ▶▶▶ **REDIRECT:** After answering, return back to the core message. Remind them what's at stake and what motivates us to show up and fight for our students every day.

## OUR CORE MESSAGE: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

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- ▶▶ **This is about our students and our classrooms.** Prop. 55 generated over \$14.6 BILLION for California public schools and community colleges in the last fiscal year alone. Everyone can find out how much their own school district stands to lose [here](#).
- ▶▶ **This is a permanent extension of existing funding, not a new tax.** No one's taxes will change as a result of our initiative. Prop. 55 extends the existing income tax rates on couples earning over \$700K - rates that voters already approved to support our schools.
- ▶▶ **The alternative is devastating.** If we don't extend Prop. 55, our schools will lose this funding. Failure to pass this extension would mean massive education cuts in 2030.



## AAR IN ACTION

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HERE ARE SOME EXAMPLES OF USING AAR TO RESPOND TO QUESTIONS THAT COULD COME UP.

### “I TRY TO STAY OUT OF POLITICS AND FOCUS ON MY KIDS.”

- ▶▶▶ **AFFIRM:** “I understand. Your focus is on your students, and that’s what makes you a great teacher.”
- ▶▶▶ **ANSWER:** “The truth is, Prop 55 directly and deeply impacts your classroom. It’s the funding source that generated close to \$15 billion for our schools last year alone.” (local school district amount also good to swap in)
- ▶▶▶ **REDIRECT:** “This isn’t just politics; it’s about the resources we need to do our jobs each day. If we don’t get this extension on the ballot and then get it passed, our district is facing massive, unavoidable cuts in a few years. Can you imagine what our classrooms would look like if that happens?”
- ▶▶▶ **END WITH:** “Will you sign the petition today to get this proposition on the ballot?”

### “I’VE HEARD THAT INCREASING TAXES ON THE RICH COULD HARM JOBS AND RAISE PRICES.”

- ▶▶▶ **AFFIRM:** “That’s a valid concern, and I understand being worried about prices, especially in this economy.”
- ▶▶▶ **ANSWER:** To be clear, this isn’t a new tax. Prop 55 is an extension of the personal income tax rates voters already approved in 2016. It only applies to couples earning over \$700K. This existing funding stream is what has been supporting our schools.
- ▶▶▶ **REDIRECT:** “The real harm to our communities would be letting this funding expire. What do you think would happen to your students and your school, when \$14.6 billion disappears from the education budget? Do you think we can still educate students with massive layoffs and budget cuts?”
- ▶▶▶ **END WITH:** “Will you sign the petition today to get this proposition on the ballot?”

### “I’M SO BUSY, I JUST DON’T HAVE THE TIME TO TALK ABOUT THIS RIGHT NOW.”

- ▶▶▶ **AFFIRM:** “I hear you. It feels like we are all stretched thinner than ever right now.”
- ▶▶▶ **ANSWER:** “I’ll be quick. This is the single most important issue for our school funding. If Prop. 55 isn’t extended, our schools lose a massive source of funding and we could see one in six educators laid off.”
- ▶▶▶ **REDIRECT:** “We are fighting to prevent devastating cuts to our own district.”
- ▶▶▶ **END WITH:** “Can you join me in signing the petition so we can get this on the ballot to protect our students and our colleagues?”

Our students and schools are counting on us. Use the AAR method to help stay focused on our message and cut through our opponent’s spin. This is our fight to win. We cannot risk massive cuts to education by letting this funding expire in 2030.