



**FACTUAL SUMMARY  
DE BEQUE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT  
MAY 2020 ELECTION FOR VOTER AUTHORIZATION  
TO INCREASE PROPERTY TAX REVENUE**

**THE FIRE DISTRICT.** De Beque Fire Protection District provides fire protection, fire suppression, rescue, extrication, hazardous materials, emergency medical, and ambulance services to a 767 square mile area including the Town of De Beque and the surrounding residential, agricultural, and mountainous areas. The Fire District is independent from the Town of De Beque and is governed by its own five-member elected Board of Directors.

**SUMMARY OF THE ISSUE.** The Fire District has not increased its property tax rate since its formation in 2008. However, in the last twelve years, the Fire District's call volume has increased significantly, including a 39% increase in call volume between 2013 and 2018. At the same time, its property tax revenue has dropped from over \$4 million per year to less than \$1 million per year, primarily due to a decline in oil and gas revenue. As a result, the revenue currently generated from the Fire District's 4.0 mill property tax is not enough to sustain the Fire District's operations. The Fire District's vehicles and equipment are aging and in need of repair and replacement, and the Fire District is unable to meet National Fire Protection Association standards for staffing on residential fires. The Fire District is proposing a property tax revenue increase that would fix the Fire District's property tax revenue at \$2.5 million annually by having the mill levy float up or down as needed to generate the \$2.5 million in revenue. However, under the proposal, the Fire District's mill levy would be capped at no more than 9.0 mills, even if less than \$2.5 million in revenue would be generated.

**ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE PROPOSAL.** If successful, the proposal will increase the amount of property taxes the Fire District collects. For voters who support less and smaller government, the Fire District's increase in tax revenues may be contrary to this objective. The property tax revenues would fund a variety of Fire District priorities, including increased staffing, recruitment and retention, replacing equipment, and repairing or replacing vehicles. Voters who support only some of these priorities may be opposed to an increase in property tax revenues to fund all of them.

**ARGUMENTS FOR THE PROPOSAL.** Increasing the Fire District's property tax revenues will enable the Fire District to meet the community's increasing demands for emergency services. In order to provide high-quality emergency services and response times, the Fire District must have an adequate number of personnel and must use safe and well-maintained equipment and vehicles. However, because the Fire District's current revenues have dropped by more than 75% from the revenues it received in its first year of operations, the Fire District must operate at a level that is understaffed and with vehicles and equipment that are past their useful life. The Fire District's proposal to cap the mill levy at the amount needed to generate \$2.5 million in revenue or 9.0 mills, whichever is less, means that the Fire District will not receive more revenue that what it needs to provide effective emergency services.

**THE BALLOT ISSUE.** On January 21, 2020, the Fire District's Board of Directors adopted a Resolution calling for a May 5, 2020 election to seek voter approval of the property tax revenue increase through the following ballot issue:

SHALL DE BEQUE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT TAXES BE INCREASED BY \$1,561,586 (FIRST FULL FISCAL YEAR DOLLAR INCREASE) ANNUALLY, OR BY SUCH OTHER AMOUNT IN ANY SUBSEQUENT YEAR AS IS NECESSARY TO GENERATE AD VALOREM PROPERTY TAX REVENUES FOR THE DISTRICT IN THE TOTAL AMOUNT OF \$2,500,000 ANNUALLY, BEGINNING IN LEVY YEAR 2020 (FOR COLLECTION IN CALENDAR YEAR 2021), PROVIDED THAT THE DISTRICT'S PROPERTY TAX RATE SHALL NOT BE CERTIFIED ABOVE 9.000 MILLS IN ANY YEAR WITHOUT THE VOTERS' PRIOR APPROVAL, AND SHALL ALL REVENUE AND ANY EARNINGS ON THE DISTRICT'S TOTAL AD VALOREM PROPERTY TAX UP TO 9.000 MILLS CONSTITUTE A PERMANENT VOTER-APPROVED REVENUE CHANGE WITHIN THE MEANING OF ARTICLE X, SECTION 20 OF THE COLORADO CONSTITUTION AND AN EXCEPTION TO THE LIMITATIONS SET FORTH IN SECTION 29-1-301 OF THE COLORADO REVISED STATUTES, AND ANY OTHER LAW.