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BGR Media Release

For Immediate Release – October 24, 2018

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BGR Examines Jefferson Parish Tax Renewals

Today BGR releases [three reports](#) on Jefferson Parish tax renewals for drainage works, juvenile services, and animal shelter and health services that voters will consider on November 6, 2018. If approved, each tax would be renewed for 10 years, from 2021 to 2030.

[On the Ballot: Jefferson Drainage Property Tax Renewal](#)

Voters in Jefferson Parish, with the exception of Grand Isle, will decide whether to renew a 5-mill property tax for drainage works. The tax is expected to generate \$16.9 million annually.

BGR Position: FOR. The federal government has invested heavily in major drainage projects in Jefferson Parish since the May 1995 floods. Now that those projects are complete, the Parish faces a significant repayment obligation to the federal government. The tax is necessary to meet that obligation. It will also help maintain the current pace of work on numerous neighborhood drainage problems that remain a Parish responsibility. While the Parish's drainage department has a \$149 million capital fund balance, \$129 million is allocated to projects. Substantial reserves enable it to keep its five-year capital investment plan on track and minimize the costs and impacts of emergency repairs. The department continuously updates the plan using computer modeling to prioritize investments that will reduce flood risks throughout the parish.

On the Ballot: Jefferson Juvenile Services Tax Renewal

Voters parishwide will decide whether to renew a 3.5-mill property tax for juvenile services. The tax is expected to generate \$12.1 million annually.

BGR Position: FOR. Jefferson Parish's Juvenile Services Department has used the tax to deliver professional treatment and regular supervision to youth who enter the juvenile justice system. The department has implemented evidence-based practices and reforms recommended by national juvenile justice advocacy organizations to demonstrably reduce incarceration and probation while also lowering rates of recidivism. Without the tax revenue, which provides almost all of its budget, Juvenile Services would have no substantial alternative funding source to operate its detention facility. This would leave Juvenile Court judges no guaranteed option for detention of even the highest-risk youth. In addition, the department would be unable to pay for probation officers, thus forcing the Parish to depend on the State's Office of Juvenile Justice for juvenile probation services. That office's probation caseload per officer already far exceeds recommended standards, and likely could not provide parish youth with the same level of support they receive from Juvenile Services. With implementation of a new State law that processes 17-year-olds in the juvenile justice system, Juvenile Services' costs will grow. Maintaining sufficient funding will be necessary to ensure that the department can continue to provide the same level of service.

On the Ballot: Jefferson Animal Shelter & Health Tax Renewal

Voters parishwide will decide whether to renew a 2.26-mill property tax for animal shelter and control, public health facilities, and services and supports to parish residents with mental health needs, addictive disorders and intellectual or developmental disabilities. The tax is expected to generate \$7.8 million annually.

BGR Position: FOR. The millage pays for State mandates for public and behavioral health, supports programs and services that are vital to the well-being of vulnerable Parish residents, and provides the primary source of funding for animal control and shelter services. The entities receiving revenue from the millage have demonstrated capable stewardship of taxpayers' money by controlling spending, improving outcomes and responding to parish needs. The entities have identified legitimate projects or services that they would fund with any additional revenue realized from the Parish's restoration of the millage rate to the maximum authorized 2.26-mill rate.

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BGR is a private, nonprofit, independent research organization. Since its founding in 1932, it has been dedicated to informed public policy-making and the effective use of public resources in the Greater New Orleans area. For more information, call 525-4152 or visit BGR's website, www.bgr.org.