

Operational Referendum

ELLSWORTH COMMUNITY SCHOOL DISTRICT



Please vote April 3, 2018

April 3, 2018 Referendum Information Commonly Asked Questions

What is the purpose of this referendum?

This operational referendum is necessary to continue current educational programs, investments in technology, co-curricular programs, and maintenance of existing facilities. The current levy override authority of \$1.3 million per year for three years granted by the local residents in April, 2015 expires at the end of the 2017-2018 school year.

What is the amount and time-frame of the referendum?

The district is seeking approval to exceed the state imposed revenue limit by \$1 million per year for four years beginning with the 2018-2019 school year. The district can seek a lower annual amount due to reduced operational expenses from building the new elementary school.

How is the amount and time-frame determined?

Three to five years is common for an operational referendum. Many factors are included in forecasting the amount, including state educational budget projections, past budgetary reductions, and specific local budgetary factors. The proposed four year timeframe aligns with the state biennial budget to allow for state funding specifics to be factored in local projections.

How will the referendum impact property taxes?

The estimated increase on current property taxes would be \$7.00 annually (or 58.5 cents per month) on a \$100,000 home beginning with the 2018-2019 school year. This follows a property tax decrease of an average of \$83 on a \$100,000 home for the 2017-2018 school year due to the retirement of debt associated with the building of the middle school and the senior high school addition in the 1990's.

Why doesn't the District use funds from the Ellsworth Elementary Referendum to fund the operational budget for the District?

It is important to understand that all funds approved by voters for the construction of the new school can only be used for the actual construction and equipping of that building. These funds cannot be used for any other purpose. The referendum to build the Ellsworth Elementary School is known as a "bond" referendum as it was for the approval to sell bonds to finance the building of the school.

Is this type of referendum common in other Districts?

Operational referendums are common in districts around our state. In 2017, there were 43 operational referendums around the state. 29 of 43 were successful. In 2016, there were 71 operational referendums with 58 being successful with similar trends in 2013, 2014, and 2015. Districts in the immediate area who currently operate with operational referendums are Prescott, St.Croix Central, Plum City, and Spring Valley. There are 25 school districts holding operational referendums on the April 3, 2018 election date.

What is the Revenue Limit and how has it affected our district?

The revenue limit is a key part of any school district's budget. This is a state imposed limit on the amount of revenue that a district gets from a combination of state general aid and local property taxes. Since it was put in place in 1993, the school district revenues have been limited by this state formula. Districts who were frugal prior to 1993 are limited to a greater degree than districts with larger prior spending. The Ellsworth Community School District has been identified as one of the “low spending districts” in the state as yearly spending and revenue limit dollars per student available at the local level are well below the state average.

Has the school district passed a referendum like this before?

In 2001, the community passed a referendum that allowed the school district to exceed the revenue limit by \$250,000 for eight years. This expired at the end of the 2008-2009 school year. In 2011, the community passed a similar referendum to exceed the revenue limit for \$1.3 million for three years. Following a rejected referendum in February, 2014, residents approved the current operational referendum in place in April, 2015 for \$1.3 million per year for three years.

What has the district done to reduce costs over time?

The school district made *millions of dollars in reductions reaching back more than a decade.* The district reduced curricular programs as well as teaching and support staff. Many changes to employee benefits, increases in athletic and other student fees, and other budgetary reductions were also made.

Please Vote - April 3, 2018