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## **School District of Jefferson to Host Referendum Community Listening Sessions**

*Residents invited to hear presentations, ask questions ahead of April 2 vote*

JEFFERSON, WI — The School District of Jefferson will host two more community listening sessions in March focused on the April 2 operational referendum question.

The events will give parents, staff, and community members the opportunity to learn more about the district's financial needs and the proposed solution on the ballot. Attendees will also be able to ask questions and provide feedback.

The next event will take place Wednesday, March 6, at 5:30 p.m. in the Jefferson High School Library. The following will be Monday, March 18, at 5:30 p.m. in the Jefferson Middle School Library. The district also previously hosted a listening session on February 27 at Sullivan Elementary School.

“The district and board are committed to sharing as much information as possible with our community ahead of election day,” said Charles Urness, Superintendent. “We are pleased to host these upcoming listening sessions to provide background information on why the district is facing financial challenges, just like many other districts across the state. We invite all members of our community to attend and take part in these important conversations about the future of Jefferson schools.”

Like all Wisconsin districts, SDoJ has a state-imposed revenue limit based on a formula established in 1993. This outdated formula, paired with minimal state aid for public schools in recent years, has led many school districts to seek local support through operational referendums. Over the last decade, more than half of Wisconsin districts have received similar approval from voters.

SDOJ has been actively right-sizing to control expenditures and adapt to evolving needs. The district has already made significant cuts to balance the budget, including \$400,000 alone over the past year.

If the April 2 operational referendum is approved, the district will be able to exceed its state-imposed revenue limit by \$2.1 million per year over the next four years. The referendum would then expire unless voters approved a new referendum before then.

Funding provided through the referendum would enable SDoJ to avoid significant cuts to essential programs, services, and staffing across its schools. Priority would be placed on maintaining comprehensive instructional and co-curricular programs, student support and mental health services, and safety and technology infrastructure. The district would also look to sustain salaries and benefits.

With an approved referendum on April 2, residents would see a projected property tax increase of \$1.13 for every \$1,000 of assessed property value. The district's total mill rate (or property tax rate) is projected to be \$10.17, still the second-lowest rate in over a decade.

For more information on the proposed referendum, including answers to frequently asked questions, visit <https://www.sdoj.org/community/operational-referendum-2024.cfm>.

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