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Jefferson Board of Education Approves Operational Referendum Question for April 2 Ballot

Voter-approved referendum would help district protect student programs and retain staff

JEFFERSON, WI — At its Monday meeting, the School District of Jefferson Board of Education voted to place an operational referendum question on the ballot for Tuesday, April 2, 2024.

If voters approve the referendum, 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.

The funding provided through the proposed referendum would help the district avoid significant cuts to programs, services, and staffing. Top priorities would be on maintaining comprehensive instructional & co-curricular programs, student support and mental health services, safety & facilities infrastructure, and sustaining salary and benefits.

“As a district, we have maintained financial discipline and have been responsible with the money our taxpayers have invested in their local schools,” said Charles Urness, Superintendent. “As it turns out, the realities of the state funding formula, rising costs, and dwindling financial support for public education from the state legislature in recent years mean we must turn more toward our local community for the funding we need. This referendum is necessary to maintain the exceptional schools that have become such a point of pride for our entire community.”

Like all Wisconsin districts, the School District of Jefferson 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 This outdated formula, paired with minimal state aid for public schools in recent years, has led many districts to seek local support through operational referendums. Over the last decade, more than half of Wisconsin districts have received similar approval from voters.

The School District of Jefferson has already made significant cuts to adjust its budget, including \$400,000 over the past year.

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. If the referendum passes, the district’s total mill rate (or property tax rate) would be \$10.17, still the second lowest rate in over a decade. The increased school levy tax credit (SLTC) will help offset some of this impact. You can find that amount listed on your tax bill.

The district will soon be sharing more information, including a dedicated webpage with answers to frequently asked questions. Election day is Tuesday, April 2, 2024.

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