

The Riverdale School District is placing an operational referendum on the ballot for **Tuesday, August 13th, 2024**. The referendum question asks voters' permission to exceed the revenue limit. The revenue limit is a state law which caps the amount of revenue the school district receives to pay operating expenses. It is not uncommon for districts to go to referendum to raise more than their caps set by the state, which were created in the early 1990s. In Spring of 2024, 103 WI school districts went to referendum .

Why does the Riverdale School District need a referendum?

The District estimates a fiscal shortfall for the 2025-26 school year and beyond and is asking the community to approve an Operational Referendum for a total of five years. A successful Operational Referendum will allow the Riverdale School District to continue providing excellent educational programming to meet the needs of our students and attain our mission : “To develop students with a strong academic foundation and compassion for others.”

The referendum specifically asks to exceed the revenue limit by:

- \$800,000 for the 2025-2026 school year
- \$800,000 for the 2026-2027 school year
- \$1,185,000 per year beginning with the 2027-2028 school year and ending with the 2029-2030 school year

And is for non-recurring purposes consisting of operational costs to maintain instructional programs, staffing, technology, transportation and facilities management.

We have a budgeted deficit for the current 23-24 school year of -\$492,911. Our projected budget deficit for the 24-25 school year is approximately \$610,000. Projections after the 24-25 school year are at approximately \$800,000 and increase every year after. We are able to operate for the next two years because we have built up our fund balance during the couple of COVID years we weren't running full programs. We will need to pass a referendum for the 25-26 school year to avoid making major cuts to our teaching staff that will significantly impact class sizes and offerings for students.

Why does the fiscal shortfall exist?

Revenue Limits cap what the school district can receive from the state and taxpayers from aid and levy dollars. Revenue limits were capped in 1993 at the level they were spending at the time. This means all 421 school districts were capped at different levels. Riverdale was originally capped at \$9300 per student, the lowest amount possible while other schools were capped at a larger amount. While Riverdale is an economically responsible district, a number of things in recent years has made it increasingly difficult to meet the needs of our students and community without exceeding these caps. The major issues are record inflationary increases, labor shortages, insufficient funds from the state, and the end of federal funding (Covid grants).

Didn't we just pass a referendum?

We appreciate the support of our community. The last referendum was passed in 2021. It allowed us to make facility additions and improvements as well as provide operational assistance. The 2021 referendum had a net zero impact on local taxpayers. Since then the district has experienced: inflationary increases, supply and labor shortages and increased student needs. The current referendum does not meet the operational needs of the district.

How has Riverdale tried to balance the budget?

Riverdale takes pride in fiscal responsibility. We have already implemented the following changes to cut costs:

- reduction of an elementary classroom teacher resulting in larger class sizes
- elimination of two early interventionist positions
- reduction of full time library media specialist
- reduction of extra-curricular opportunities for students
- elimination of early releases and moved to fewer professional and staff development days to save transportation and student services costs, including professional support staff wages
- reduction of the number of full-time support staff when part-time positions could be filled
- utilization of COPS Grant funding to supplement maintenance budget

How will this referendum affect my taxes?

For the 1st year (2025-2026), taxes will raise \$1.57 per \$1,000 or \$157 per \$100,000. After the first year, the school district gets a return of 27% of our expenses from the state. This will level out the mill rate at \$1.15 per \$1,000 or \$115 per 100,000. Please refer to the graphs on our website for a more detailed explanation.

How will revenue from the referendum be used?

The Riverdale School District has a projected deficit of \$492,911 for 23-24, \$610,606 in 24-25 and \$885,851 in 26-27. In order to maintain a healthy fund balance and staffing, we are asking the taxpayers to approve the proposed non-recurring operating referendum.

This would allow the District to:

- fund the inflationary costs that impact the district's operating budget
- maintain programs such as full day 4K, current class sizes, junior high and high school course offerings, high school advanced placement courses, college and career opportunities, and extracurricular and sporting options
- update and preserve current transportation fleet and recruit drivers
- maintain current technology services, such as one-to-one devices
- contribute to the district's facilities building and maintenance projects
- manage a fiscally responsible fund balance

How does a failed referendum impact our students?

If the referendum is not approved on August 13th, the District will develop a process for making significant budget reductions for the 2025–2026 school year and beyond.

The cost of not passing the referendum is significant, affecting not only our students but our community in turn. Failing to pass a referendum would lead to increased class sizes and reduced academic and extracurricular programming, including sports, class trips, and club opportunities. Options for college and career readiness would be significantly reduced. Students would be less supported.

Reducing teaching staff has the most impact on the budget. Not passing this referendum would most likely result in cutting 6-8 teachers and several programs/classes to balance the budget for the 25-26 school year. The ability to attract and retain quality staff in an already competitive market will become increasingly difficult as we increase class sizes and workloads.

Where and when do I vote?

On August 13, 2024, all polling places open at 7:00 A.M. and close at 8:00 P.M.

All questions concerning your polling place should be directed to the municipal clerk in your town or village. You can register to vote, check your voter registration status, find your polling place, see your sample ballot and request an absentee ballot at the MY VOTE WISCONSIN WEBSITE - <https://myvote.wi.gov/>

For more information, please visit the Riverdale Website under “2024 Referendum”.