



PRESS RELEASE

June 18, 2025

CONTACT:

Dr. Tammy Champa

tchampa@isd761.org

507-444-8601

Owatonna School Board votes to hold special election for funding request

Owatonna, MN -- At its June 16 business meeting, the Owatonna School Board voted unanimously to hold a special election on Tuesday, November 4, 2025, asking residents to consider an operating levy increase to support the continued excellence of Owatonna Public Schools.

The proposal reflects a shared approach to school funding—balancing district budget reductions with a request for increased community investment. If approved, the estimated tax impact would be approximately \$23 per month for a home valued at \$275,000.

To help address ongoing budget challenges, the district has already identified reductions for the 2025-26 school year, including not filling positions due to retirements and issuing nonrenewals for teaching contracts in elementary, special education, secondary language arts, and secondary science.

If voters approve the levy, the additional funding would help sustain appropriate class sizes, retain high-quality staff, and continue offering valuable programs such as Career Pathways at the high school level, as well as strong fine arts and athletics opportunities for students across the district.

“The finance committee and school board carefully considered the current economic challenges for the community balanced with the needs of our students,” said School Board Chair Mark Sebring. “This shared approach of district budget cuts combined with an increased operating levy from the community will allow Owatonna Public Schools to continue its tradition of excellence in preparing students for the future.”

—more—

The decision to request support from district voters was based on a thorough review of long-term financial projections and planning discussions about inadequate state funding and unfunded mandates:

- State funding is not keeping pace with inflation or increasing educational costs. If state funding had simply kept pace with inflation, Owatonna Public Schools would receive an additional \$1,837 per student or approximately \$9,000,000+ annually. No additional operating levy would be needed.
- Unfunded mandates by the state and federal governments mean additional funding is needed from local taxpayers to pay for the required programs.
- Owatonna's voter-approved operating levy is second to the bottom of schools in the Big 9 Conference. While Owatonna's levy is currently at \$556 per student, Faribault's levy is \$1006 and Northfield's is \$2184.

If the request is not approved, the district will face a total of at least \$3,000,000 in additional budget cuts for the 2026-2027 school year, resulting in class size increases through teacher layoffs, cuts to school and district support services, and cuts to academics, activities, athletic and music programs.

"I have been impressed with the support for Owatonna Public Schools and all the ways the community encourages our students," said incoming Superintendent Tammy Champa. "I look forward to meeting our constituents and sharing how support for this referendum will help us continue to achieve our mission of inspiring excellence in every learner, every day."

For more information regarding the operating levy referendum, please visit isd761.org/levy.

The mission of Owatonna Public Schools is Inspiring Excellence - Every Learner - Every Day. To learn more about the school district, visit isd761.org or follow on social media - @owatonna761.

###