



TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 3

2026 OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM

*An Investment in Our Students
is an Investment in Our Community*



Why Is the Referendum Needed?

Funding Challenges

- Less State Aid
- Lack of funding for Special Education
- Increased State & Federal Mandates

Inflation Driving Costs Up

- Building Maintenance
- Insurance
- Transportation
- Utilities
- Classroom Technology
- Salaries & Benefits
- Equipment



Cost Savings Already in Place:

- Health Insurance Benefit Change – reduced cost by 26%
- Staff reductions resulting in savings of \$450,000
- Energy-efficiency updates as a part of the middle/high school capital referendum projects
- Reduced bus transportation routes from five down to four
- General budget transparency and reductions at the elementary, middle, and high school levels
- Deferred building and grounds maintenance, including the elementary school



HOW DOES PASSING AN OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM IMPACT OUR STUDENTS AND OUR COMMUNITY?

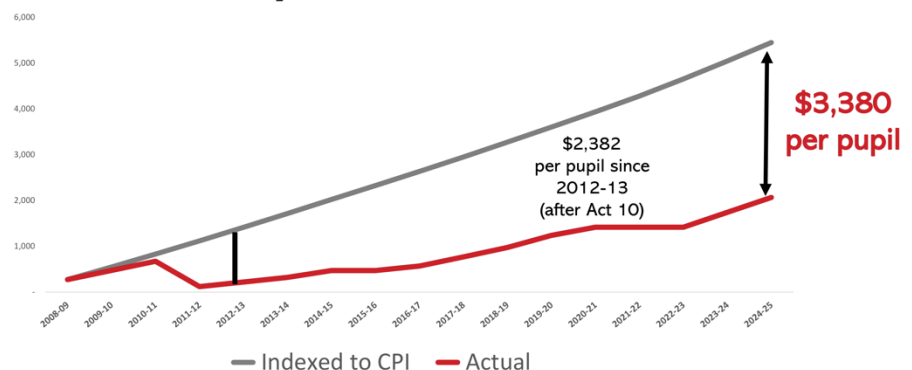
The Operational Referendum will allow the School District of Washburn to continue offering high-quality classes, extracurricular opportunities, and programs that support student success and a thriving community. High-quality programs rely on attracting and retaining high-quality staff. Passing the Operational Referendum will ensure continued student success.

WHY DOES THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF WASHBURN NEED AN OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM?



Strong financial stewardship has kept the District stable, but rising costs are creating current and future deficits. The operational referendum is necessary to bridge the gap between limited state funding and rising operational costs. Approval would allow the District to maintain strong educational programs, attract and retain excellent staff, strengthen its financial position, and reduce reliance on short-term borrowing.

General school district revenues per pupil lag inflation by more than \$3,300 since 2009



Source: Kava, Russ (May 22, 2024) Legislative Fiscal Bureau Memo re: Revenue Limit Per Pupil Adjustment Indexed to Inflation; WASBO Calculations

Had the state maintained the annual inflation adjustment, Washburn would have had approximately \$1,500,000 more per year since 2009.



MISSION:
Connecting to
educate, inspire,
and empower.



School District of Washburn
P.O. Box 730
Washburn, WI 54891



Local Postal Customer

Tax Impact

	Estimated 2026-27 Impact
Property Value	
\$100,000	\$123
\$200,000	\$246
\$300,000	\$369
\$400,000	\$492

The 2027-28 tax impact will be an additional \$13.00; in 2028-29, \$54.00, and in 2029-30, \$21.00.

Community Sessions

- Monday, Sept. 21
- Middle/High School Library 6:00 PM
- Wednesday, Sept. 30
- Elementary School Library 6:00 PM
- Wednesday, Oct. 7
- Middle/High School Library 6:00 PM
- Wednesday, Oct. 14
- Elementary School Library 6:00 PM

Contact us if you want us to present to your organization.

Want to Learn More?

Email Denise Michaelsen at dmichaelsen@washburn.k12.wi.us



Learn More on Our Website

HOW WILL THE OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM IMPACT TAXPAYERS?

The funds will alleviate the fiscal shortfall created by the historical lack of increases in the allowable per-student spending from the state of Wisconsin. High inflationary changes to operating costs—such as transportation, utilities, maintenance, and staffing—have impacted all school districts. Please see the tax impact chart on the left.

WE ARE NOT ALONE

Since 1994, Wisconsin school districts have been funded primarily through a combination of state aid and local property taxes. Each school district has a revenue limit created by the state budget. In most cases statewide, revenue limits have not kept pace with inflation. Most Wisconsin school districts (85%) have proposed operating referendums to meet budget challenges. It's particularly notable that during 2024 & 2025, 180 of Wisconsin's 421 districts went to operational referendum; that's 43% of all Wisconsin school districts.

HOW DOES A FAILED OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM IMPACT OUR STUDENTS?

The cost of inaction is high, affecting not only our students, but the entire fabric of our community. Failing to pass a referendum could lead to increased class sizes and reduced academic programming. Attracting and retaining quality staff in an already competitive market will become increasingly difficult.

WHAT IS AN OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM?

An Operational Referendum asks voters' permission to exceed the state-imposed revenue limit to fund annual school operations. It is not a referendum to incur debt for construction or renovation of schools or facilities like the capital referendum that passed in 2024.

THE BALLOT WILL READ

Shall the School District of Washburn, Bayfield County, Wisconsin be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$900,000 for the 2026-2027 school year, by \$1,100,000 for the 2027-2028 school year, by \$1,300,000 for the 2028-2029 school year, and by \$1,500,000 for the 2029-2030 school year, for non-recurring purposes consisting of operational and maintenance expenses?