

**YOUR VIEWS**

**State funding reality necessitates the passage of school referendums**

In The Gazette dated Oct. 17, 2024, Janesville School District Superintendent Mark Holzman eloquently outlines the two Janesville School District referendum questions on the ballot on November 5.

As a former Janesville School Board President and City Council member I have more than a working knowledge of both school and municipal finances dictated by the State of Wisconsin.

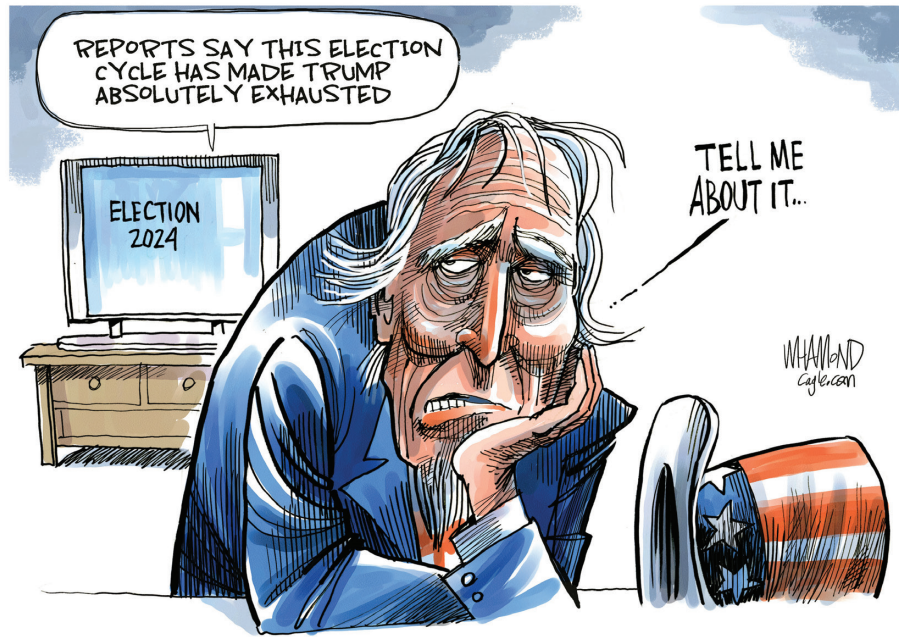
Both taxing districts are governed by revenue caps under formulas that have changed over the years. Both allow for some increased revenues, but neither address or govern increasing costs. They tell local officials how much they have to spend but do not limit vendors in any way how much they charge. Thus, an imbalance which has perpetuated the only way local officials can obtain additional revenue, namely referendums.

The two questions on the ballot are:

1. A \$14.5 million operational referendum that was originally approved in 2020 for 4 years. This question extends the same \$14.5 for an additional 2 years. If something doesn't change with the state's funding formula this will in all likelihood be back for further extension in 2026. Since these funds are part of the current budget it will not dictate a tax increase as it is already part of the district's revenue stream.

2. A \$151.8 capital referendum addresses current building issues facing the district. There is no new construction being proposed. The vast majority of this question is "high-priority" maintenance needs. The district has 20 facilities totalling over 2 million sq.ft. Yes, over 2 million square feet.

The average age of our facilities are over 65 years old, with 4 buildings being close to 100 years old, and the newest, Kennedy Elementary, being over 20 years old. All 20



buildings are receiving attention with these new dollars in some fashion, some more than others depending on age. The cost for this question on the ballot is \$81 per \$100,000 of assessed property value.

You can find more exact information for each building provided by the district at [www.janesvillek12.wi.us/referendum](http://www.janesvillek12.wi.us/referendum).

Citizens should be proud of the conditions of these buildings, however, current formulas do not allow these maintenance costs to be absorbed by the operating budgets. That ended years ago with the advent of revenue caps.

I know some taxpayers are frustrated by the continual referendums, trust me so am I. But they are not going away under current funding formulas, and if defeated only become more expensive down the road. Please support these 2 questions and lobby your state legislators to provide the statewide relief that school districts and municipalities need to balance their budgets.

**TOM WOLFE**  
Janesville

**Grid defection going on everywhere**

Gazette, whilst fronting Alliant's solar panels, attached below is just one of many examinations of the large, and

becoming more obvious, issue of "grid defection" and the problems it causes for utilities.

In that light it is interesting that Wisconsin has not revised its administrative code, which continues to make it very difficult for individual residential hookups. But even in a relatively low state for solar power potential, and even with the laws and the utilities in the way, I have no doubt that grid defection will continue here as it is everywhere else — no matter what is claimed by the utilities.

A parallel issue should be the use of additional generated renewable power, for bitcoin centers and data centers. Utilities would have us believe that additional panel generated power will come to our homes rather than to the crypto and data centers.-- that is, if we tie in our panels to the grid instead of our own outlets.

<https://pv-magazine-usa.com/2024/10/17/grid-defection-is-profitable-in-some-solar-rich-u-s-locations/>

**TOM MURN**  
Newark

**Referendum passage will stabilize Evansville schools**

On Nov. 5, Evansville residents will be asked to vote on a nonrecurring operational referendum to allow the

Evansville Community School District to exceed revenue limits by \$2.9 million for each of the next three years. I am writing to encourage Evansville voters to join me in supporting this referendum.

The state imposes revenue limits on school districts. In short, a school district's revenue limit is the maximum amount of revenue that can be raised by the district, through state aid and property tax. The problem is that Wisconsin's revenue limit has risen by 6% over the last decade whereas inflation has increased by over 28% in the same time.

As a result, most Wisconsin public schools are struggling financially just to pay for everyday costs. Until our state lawmakers step up and fix this broken school funding system, districts like Evansville have no choice but to go to referendum, asking taxpayers to allow the district to raise its revenue limit.

I am a lifelong Evansville resident — I grew up in Evansville and still live there today. My parents both taught in the district for over 30 years each. I was a 1985 graduate of EHS, and my daughter attended the ECSD for 13 years, graduating in 2019. I love this community and our schools and consider our schools to be the heart and soul of our great community. Evansville residents — our

What do you think?  
Let us know in a letter to the editor



Email:  
[letters@gazettextra.com](mailto:letters@gazettextra.com)

Mailing address:  
The Gazette  
1 S. Parker Drive  
P.O. Box 5001  
Janesville, WI 53547-5001

school district needs our support on November 5.

Last April's failed referendum resulted in the reduction of 10 staff positions, employees taking a pay freeze and reductions in benefits, two bus routes being eliminated, and programmatic reductions ranging from reduced course and curriculum offerings to co-curricular offerings.

Voting "yes" in the referendum will allow the district to bring back offerings (including Science, Spanish, Tech Ed, etc.) and allow the district to perform necessary facilities maintenance and address HVAC issues at the high school.

With a projected property tax impact of \$40 per \$100k in home value, per year, the cost pales compared to what is at stake if the referendum fails and additional painful cuts are necessary.

Passage of the Nov. 5 referendum is essential to stabilizing our valued school district. Please join me in demonstrating our commitment to our students, educators, parents and the community of Evansville as a whole, by voting "yes" on Nov. 5 in support of the ECSD referendum.

**JANE SCHWARTZ OBERDORF**  
Evansville