



RUSD Referendum Strong Schools. Strong Community.

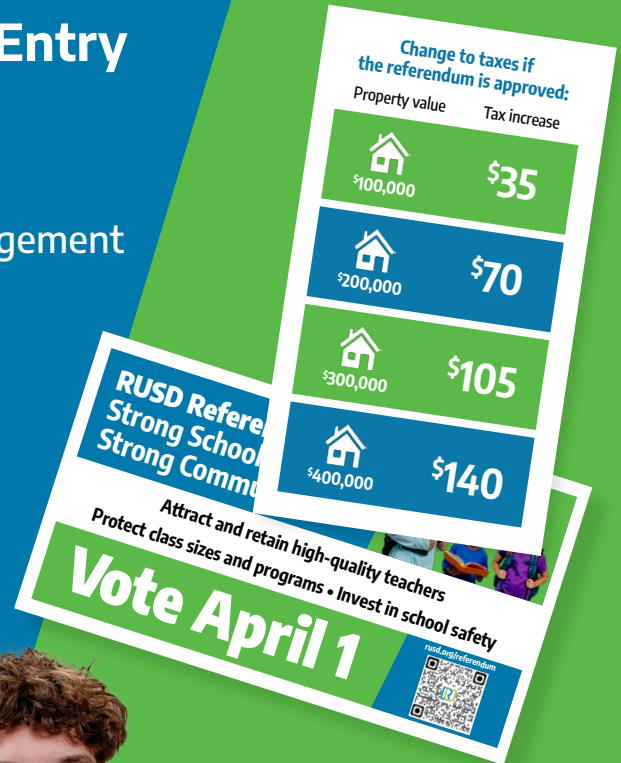
The one after the Billion Dollar referendum.

NSPRA Gold Medallion Award Entry Bond/Finance Campaign

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Racine Unified School District
Enrollment: 16,000
Communication Team of 3

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Synopsis

In 2020, Racine Unified School District (RUSD) narrowly passed a historic \$1 billion facilities referendum—the largest in state history. For an urban district serving students in more than 20 aging buildings, some dating back to the 19th century, the investment has been transformational. Schools are being modernized, yet serious financial challenges remain.

Like most Wisconsin districts, RUSD continues to face structural budget deficits. Since 2010, state funding has not kept pace with inflation, while revenue caps established 30 years ago limit local property tax increases. As a result, the district cut more than \$34 million in 2024 and faced an additional \$24 million shortfall in 2025.

In 2025, RUSD sought voter approval for an operational referendum - \$190 million over five years. Success required more than explaining a ballot question. It required building understanding and trust. More than a year before the election, the district began proactive community education with four clear objectives:

- Explain why RUSD and neighboring districts face recurring budget cuts.
- Demonstrate fiscally responsible decision-making.
- Reinforce that the 2020 \$1 billion referendum funds are being used as promised and, by law, can only support facilities.
- Build confidence that new funding would protect teachers and staff, maintain class sizes and preserve vital programs.

With a three-person communications team, RUSD implemented a comprehensive, research-driven strategy.

- **Research:** A scientific phone poll, community engagement, voter trend analysis, and ballot language testing informed campaign strategy.
- **Planning:** Polling data and stakeholder feedback shaped clear, research-based messaging and targeted outreach plans.
- **Execution:** A multi-channel campaign leveraged community influencers, targeted digital marketing, video storytelling, social media, earned media, and face-to-face engagement to emphasize transparency, accountability and student impact.
- **Results:** Voters approved the referendum, securing operational funding to maintain staff and critical programs. Equally important, the campaign strengthened public trust, increased understanding of school finance and built positive momentum for continued support of public education in Racine.

RUSD Referendum
Strong Schools.
Strong Community.



Vote April 1

rusd.org/referendum



Research

Research played a crucial role in developing a strategic communication plan.

Research: **Scientific Phone Poll**

We partnered with Lincoln Park Strategies to conduct a phone poll that:

- Included 400 interviews among likely voters
- Allowed us to pre-test campaign messaging
- Helped identify community priorities related to their public schools
- Tested voters' appetite for a tax levy increase and how much they would tolerate

Research: **Statewide Election Result Analysis**

Additional research included:

- Review of historical voting trends from previous Racine County referendums to identify key audiences and determine campaign strategies.
- Review of statewide election results, specifically operational referendums.
- Analyzing ballot language related to levy impact for effectiveness.

Research: **Proactive Communication & Strategic Community Engagement**

As we worked on our FY25 budget in spring 2024, these tactics helped us communicate the statewide public school funding crisis and how it was impacting RUSD:

- **Video** explaining in plain language why public schools are facing budget issues and what makes a referendum necessary.
- **One-pager** explaining the budget cuts we made.

Then we went out into the community with a tabletop exercise prompting stakeholders to prioritize school needs when facing budget cuts. This input was critical.

How We Used the Research

- The phone poll results directly influenced our key message development in terms of what our community indicated they would be willing to support related to academic priorities and tax impact.
- The engagement work done to educate our community about school finance and budget challenges helped us in multiple ways:
 - ◊ Helped us build our referendum campaign with an understanding of what our community valued and prioritized.
 - ◊ Laid the groundwork for helping our stakeholders understand how this referendum was different than the 2020 facilities referendum and why it was necessary.
 - ◊ Built some trust for RUSD in terms of fiscal responsibility.
 - ◊ Enabled groups who took part in the budget tabletop exercise to speak knowledgeably on our behalf during the referendum campaign.

Phone Poll Findings

We faced an uphill climb, but it was possible. Referendum support was just 51%.

Our top 3 take aways:

- Referendum messaging must be tied to improving **academic results** and **supporting college/career readiness**.
- School safety (staff) needed to be a key focus.
- Most voters believed RUSD received sufficient funding, pointing to the 2020 \$1 billion facilities referendum. It would be critical to distinguish this referendum and explain why it was necessary.



Community engagement tabletop exercise



Planning

Goals & Objectives:

The overall goal of our communication campaign was to win a \$190 million, five-year operational referendum election. Our objectives were to:

- Develop a referendum proposal that the Racine community would be able to support
- Minimize vocal/public opposition from likely 'no' audiences
- Clearly communicate how this referendum was different than the \$1 billion facilities referendum approved in 2020
- Clearly and transparently explain why this referendum was needed and how RUSD would be accountable to the community
- Build knowledge among our staff and community partners so that they could effectively answer commonly asked questions and support the campaign at a grassroots level

Key Messages

- On April 1, residents of the Racine Unified School District will be asked to vote on a proposed operational referendum that will impact our schools, our students and our entire community.
- State funding has continuously fallen short of what it costs to meet the needs of our students. RUSD and districts across the state have been forced to make difficult decisions to balance our budgets.
- If approved by voters, the referendum would enable the district to increase its revenue limit by \$190 million over five years allowing RUSD to:
 - ◊ Protect class sizes and vital programs including the Academies of Racine
 - ◊ Attract and retain high-quality teachers and staff who are essential for delivering exceptional education
 - ◊ Continue to enhance the safety and security of our schools
- If approved, the referendum would have an estimated initial property tax impact of \$35 per year for every \$100,000 of equalized property value in our community (e.g. owner of a \$200,000 home would see a property tax increase of \$70/year).

Budget

The overall budget for this project was just over \$55,000. These funds were primarily used for the phone poll and three mailers sent to all 59,297 households in our district boundary. Less than \$1,000 was utilized for internal print costs, small social media boosts and yard signs.

Target Audience

- Parents and families
- Staff
- All voters, with a specific focus on likely voters
- Businesses, community organizations, chamber of commerce and other leaders who hold seats of influence in the community.

Roles and Responsibilities

Each of these staff/stakeholders played a role in serving as communicators within their circles of influence.

- Superintendent
- Leadership Team (cabinet)
- School Leaders
- Parent Ambassadors
- Board of Education



Planning

Pre-referendum Strategies

- Clear and consistent communication about the successful 2020 facilities referendum highlighting results as promised and positive impact on students:
 - ◊ Regular email updates and Board presentations
 - ◊ [Website updates](#), [social media posts](#), [annual report stories](#)
 - ◊ [Groundbreakings](#), [ribbon cuttings](#) and tours open to the public
- Ongoing communication about the state of school funding in Wisconsin.
 - ◊ Consistent messages mirroring those from districts across the state



Groundbreaking for a new 2020 Referendum project.



Ribbon-cutting for a completed 2020 Referendum project.

Referendum Campaign Strategies

- Reach all registered voters and stakeholders a minimum of three times with clear and consistent messaging via multiple channels - direct mail, email, digital marketing, face-to-face, etc.
- Create trusted, recognizable ambassadors for grassroots efforts. Ensure school principals, staff, parents and community partners were armed with key messages and information to share within their spheres of influence.
- Utilize short informational videos for a targeted social media strategy featuring well-known, familiar faces, voices and social media influencers whom the community trusted and would engage with in respectful dialogue about the referendum.
- Keep the superintendent, leadership team, and school board visible and engaged throughout the community through face-to-face meetings and informational sessions.
- Ensure broad understanding of the why (state funding issues) and clear, transparent communication about tax impact on individual taxpayers (no surprises).



Execution

Arming the Frontline

We armed our frontline, 3,000 employees, with information and communication tools.

- **Face-to-Face meeting with all school leaders to:**

1. Arm them with the facts - the what, why and how of the referendum.
2. Answer questions they anticipate receiving from parents, neighbors, and friends.
3. Encourage them to be voices for the school district - informing (not persuading)

- **Digital toolkit for school leaders and staff:**

[This Google doc](#) was shared weekly - filled with user-friendly links and materials they could use in school newsletters, at school events, with family, friends, social media, etc.

We saw the impact of this work almost immediately. On social media, our school leaders didn't hesitate to engage with community members in dialogue about the referendum - politely correcting misinformation or following up with explainers or where to find more information.

Arming Our Community Partners

[This digital toolkit](#) put ready-to-use videos, social media posts, fact sheets and flyers into the hands of partner groups like our Parent Ambassadors and Academies Steering Committee (Chamber of Commerce and other business partners). Though many business partners were unable to endorse the referendum publicly, individuals were happy to share one-pagers and advocate within their networks.

Face-to-Face (and Virtual) Engagement

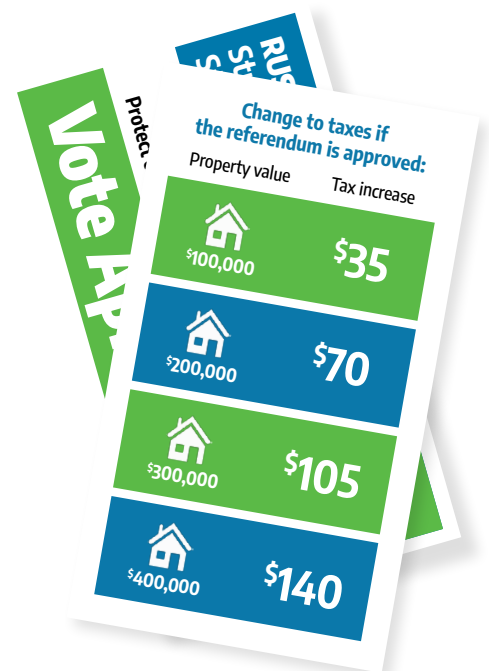
We conducted targeted, personal outreach to local organizations, churches, businesses and community leaders. Rather than asking them to attend standalone district meetings and risk low turnout, we brought the conversation to already-scheduled meetings and events, ensuring they were well-attended. Additionally, we hosted two community-wide town halls. In total, we held:

- 20 in-person meetings
- Two live virtual town halls

Property Tax Transparency

Throughout the campaign, we consistently received positive feedback about the **simplest of tools - our property tax business card**. We handed it out at every event and meeting. The transparency was appreciated and community members asked for stacks of them to share.

Our website featured a live [property tax calculator](#) for voters to input their property value and calculate how much of an increase they would personally experience with a successful referendum. **The calculator was used 3,391 times during our campaign (Google Analytics)!**



Video Storytelling and Social Media Strategy: Trusted Neighbors and Friends

Our video storytelling strategy was two-fold:

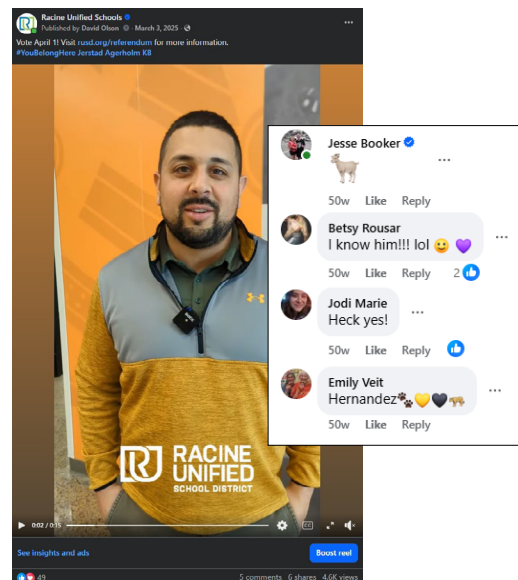
1. Informational - Superintendent Gajewski explained the referendum thoroughly in these longer videos.

- [Referendum Explainer / Spanish](#)
- [Superintendent Video 1 / Superintendent Video 2](#)
- [What the Referendum Would Fund](#)

2. Trusted & Familiar Faces

These [short, social-media videos](#) featured recognizable, trusted community members. For example, [parent Jesse](#), an RUSD alum born and raised in Racine, is a local influencer, sports announcer and charity volunteer with strong community recognition. [Pastor Johnny Ford](#), also an alum, football hall-of-famer and RUSD Community Connector, lent his voice as well. They were joined by additional parents, [alumni](#), partners, [staff](#) and [students](#) who reflected the pride and credibility of RUSD. In total, we produced 28 English and 7 Spanish language videos.

The approach proved highly effective. After Jesse's video was posted, a community member commented, "Jesse I didn't know you supported this!" Jesse shared his reasons, opening a constructive conversation. By equipping staff and partners with facts and including them in the campaign, they engaged online thoughtfully, responding to concerns with confidence and accuracy. Hearing from trusted community members, rather than only the district, built credibility and we believe helped generate yes votes.



Annual Report

Our [Annual Report](#) is typically distributed in January. But, in a referendum year, timing mattered. We adjusted our timeline to the weeks leading up to the election so voters had clear, data-driven information about the district before heading to the polls. Produced in both Spanish and English, the report was, distributed to every staff member and RUSD family, shared with local businesses, posted on our website and inserted into the local daily newspaper to reach likely voters community-wide.

Guided by phone-poll research, the content emphasized what voters cared about most: academic results, college and career readiness (including alumni spotlights), progress on 2020 referendum projects, and transparent explanations of state funding and budget reductions.



Mailers

Three mailers were delivered to all homes in our district. We strategically timed them to be opposite the community YES group's mailers, so messages were hitting likely voters nearly every week leading up to election day. Each mailer included a QR code to its Spanish version.

[Mailer 1: Feb. 17](#) | [Mailer 2: March 12](#) | [Mailer 3: March 24](#)

Additional Tactics

- Yard Signs
- Backpack Flyers
- Print Ads - community/neighborhood publications
- [RU In the Know? Podcast S3 E3](#)
- [2025 Referendum Webpage](#)





Evaluation: We Achieved Our Goal!

We achieved our overarching goal; the referendum passed by 941 votes (23,479 Yes; 22,538 No), despite the uphill battle we faced. Unlike our previous three referendums since 2010, this measure required a tax levy increase and followed a narrowly passed \$1 billion facilities referendum in 2020. While many, including our new superintendent, believed success was unlikely, data-driven research and a disciplined, strategic communication campaign made it possible.

REF - School 4620 (Vote for 1)

Precincts Reported: 72 of 72 (100.00%)

		Total
Times Cast		47,408 / 0 N/A
Candidate	Party	Total
Yes		23,479
No		22,538
Total Votes		46,017
		Total
Unresolved Write-In		0

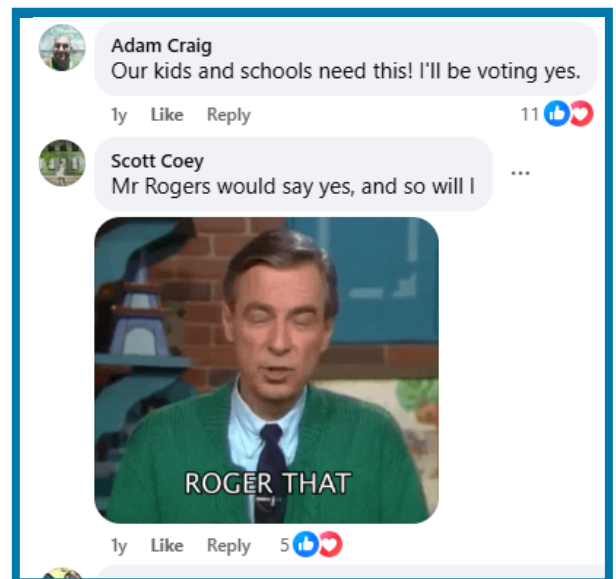
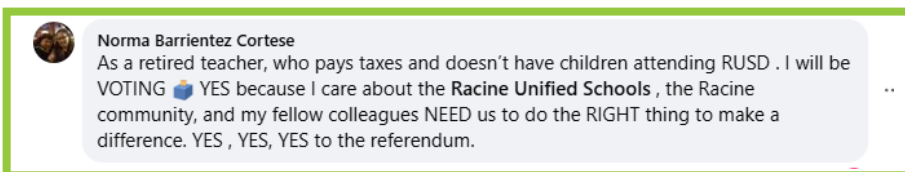
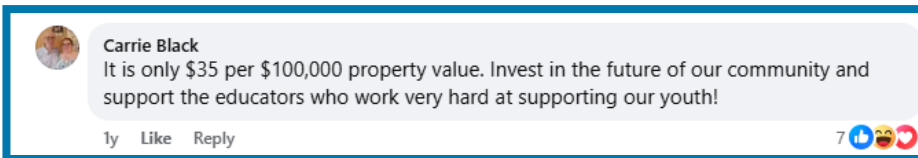
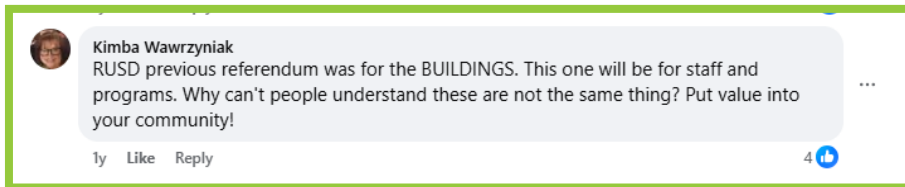
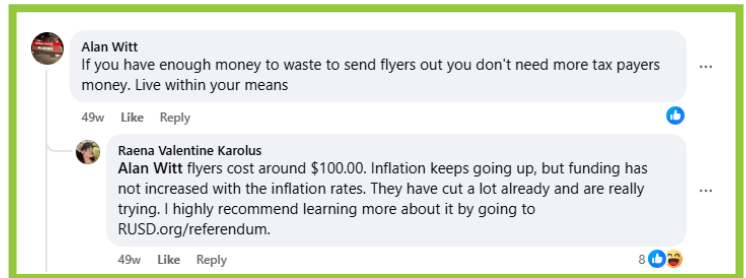
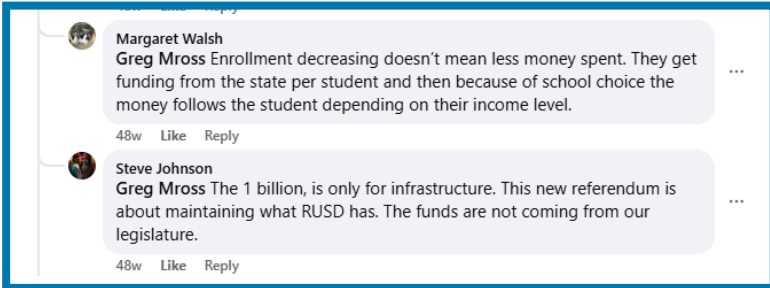
Objective: Clearly Explain the Why

By proactively communicating statewide budget challenges, engaging the community in difficult reduction decisions and being transparent about the tax impact of this referendum, we met this objective. Regardless of how they voted, our community understood the “why.”

Objective: Build Informed Stakeholders

We saw strong support from community members, staff and families through unprecedented social media engagement. Equipping stakeholders with clear information empowered them to confidently engage with their own spheres of influence - a critical factor in the campaign’s success.

On Facebook alone, our [referendum related content](#) posted during the campaign resulted in:
770,113 Impressions | 17,880 Interactions | 2,882 Comments



Unprecedented Social Media and Video Campaign Success!

While we cannot prove that social media engagement led to yes votes, we cannot ignore the data. A small buy of just \$240 across 9 videos garnered strong impressions (39,021). Positive social media relationships, built through years of strategic engagement and trust-building, also led to impressive engagement with our community. As we compare our social media campaign to neighboring districts, the difference in positive sentiment and respectful dialogue is striking.

Our content had views ranging from 4,000 to more than 16,000, with some of them seeing more than 200 viewers watching for at least one minute.

Here is a sampling of our impressive results:

How will the 2025 Referendum impact your property taxes?

Property Tax Calculator
\$190M funded over five years; an increase of \$0.35 per \$1k per year.

Example 1	Example 2	Your Home
\$100,000	\$300,000	238000 <input type="text"/> <input type="button" value="Calculate"/>
\$2.92 per month	\$8.75 per month	\$6.94 per month
\$35.00 per year	\$105.00 per year	\$83.23 per year

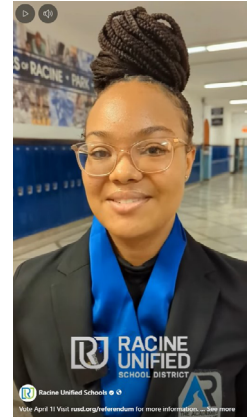


RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

On April 1, residents of the Racine Unified School District will be asked to vote on a proposed 5-year, \$190 million non-recurring operational referendum.

The money will be used for....

Racine Unified Schools © 0
Visit April 11 Visit rusd.org/referendum for more information... See more



February 25

Property Tax Transparency:

62,272 views, 580 likes/155 loves, 6,149 clicks, 199 comments, 189 shares

March 26

FAQ with the superintendent:

7,063 views, 216 1-minute views, 98 likes, 228 clicks, 68 shares

March 12

My Why with familiar faces (students, staff, parents):

8,569 views, 225 1-minute views, 146 likes, 553 clicks, 66 shares

Ongoing Review

Our research-driven strategy empowered trusted voices, equipped the community with facts and invited the public to the process long before ballots were cast. We did not shy away from difficult truths about funding, taxes or budget cuts. In doing so, we didn't just inform voters - we strengthened public trust.

This campaign also helped us build strong relationships with the community - particularly through social media, which is a unique strength for our district under the leadership of our award-winning "social media guy." Thanks to his authentic engagement and two-way dialogue, our stakeholders are more informed, more confident and more connected to their schools.

And when the next challenge comes - and another referendum inevitably will - we won't be starting from scratch. We'll be building on the trust already earned.

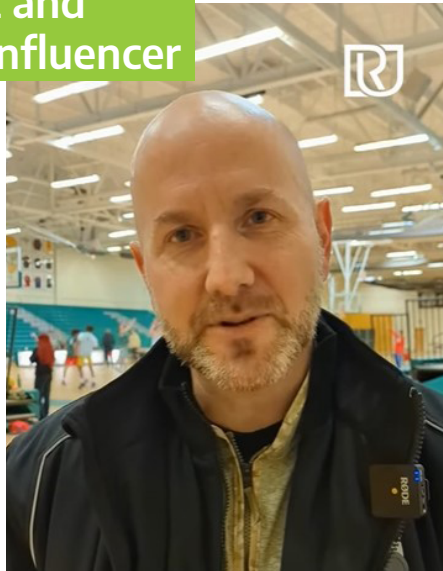


Social Media

“My Why” Videos

We produced 28 English and 7 Spanish language videos which featured students, parents, staff, community members and business partners. Each person explained why they supported the referendum.

Parent and Local Influencer



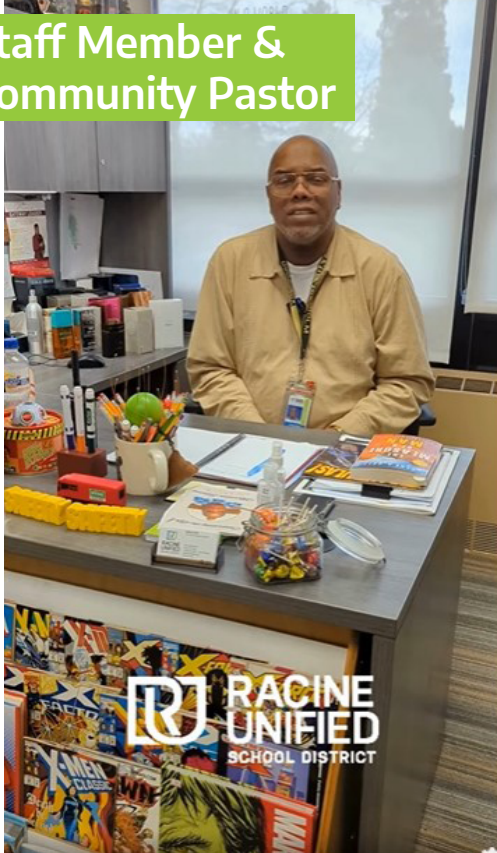
Business Partner



Student



Staff Member & Community Pastor



Student





Social Media

General Posts

RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG COMMUNITY. **VOTE APRIL 1**

LET'S KEEP UP THE MOMENTUM!

- State report card up for second straight year
- Reading scores climbing
- Graduation rate at 15-year high

RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT ESCUELAS FUERTES. COMUNIDAD FUERTE. **VOTE el 1 de ABRIL**

¡Sigamos Subiendo!

- El informe estatal ha subido por segundo año consecutivo
- Los resultados en lectura están subiendo
- La tasa de graduación la más alta en 15 años

RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT **VOTE ON OR BEFORE APRIL 1**

STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG COMMUNITY.

RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG COMMUNITY. **VOTE APRIL 1**

Estimated Property Tax Impact

If approved, the tax impact of our proposed referendum would cost the owner of a \$200,000 home **less than \$6/month** and approximately \$70/year. Head to rusd.org/referendum to enter your home's value.

RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG COMMUNITY. **VOTE APRIL 1**

DID YOU KNOW?

RUSD has already made substantial cuts, including \$34 million last year alone. Those cuts included staff, school closures and more. We can no longer continue to make cuts to help balance the budget without negatively impacting the quality of education provided to our students.

RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG COMMUNITY. **VOTE APRIL 1**

- MAINTAINING CLASS SIZES** ✓
- AVOIDING STAFF & PROGRAM CUTS** ✓
- INVESTING IN SAFE SCHOOLS** ✓

RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

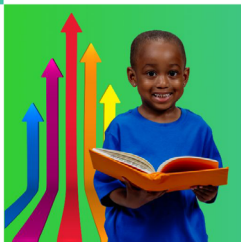
VOTE TOMORROW

RACINE UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

VOTE TODAY

THANK YOU FOR VOTING

STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG COMMUNITY.



STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG COMMUNITY.





Website

Property Tax Calculator

We embedded a Property Tax Calculator into our website. Residents could enter their property value into the calculator and it would tell them exactly how much a successful referendum would impact their payment.

RUSD REFERENDUM 2025

STRONG SCHOOLS. STRONG COMMUNITY.

On April 1, residents of the Racine Unified School District were asked to vote on an operational referendum that would impact our schools, our students and entire community.

The referendum passed: **Yes - 23,479 | No - 22,538**

This successful referendum will enable the district to increase its revenue limit by \$190 million over five years. This funding will allow us to:

- **Protect class sizes and vital programs**, including the Academies of Racine
- **Attract and retain high-quality teachers and staff** who are essential for delivering exceptional education
- Invest in the **safety and security** of our schools

In the News

- [RUSD Board approves putting \\$190M referendum on April ballots](#)
- [Racine Unified's \\$190 million referendum: What voters need to know](#)
- [Racine Unified faces uncertainty if U.S. Department of Education is eliminated](#)
- [Superintendent Soren Gajewski discusses referendum on WGTD](#)
- [Racine parents consider \\$190 million school referendum](#)
- [Letter to the Editor: Former RUSD superintendent says the April 1 referendum is critical for student success](#)

Ballot Question

Shall the Racine Unified School District, Racine County, Wisconsin be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin

Statu
the 2
\$46,0
2030
exper
staff

How will the 2025 Referendum impact your property taxes?

Property Tax Calculator

\$190M funded over five years; an increase of \$0.35 per \$1k per year.

Example 1	Example 2	Your Home
\$100,000	\$300,000	<input type="text" value="400067"/> <input type="button" value="Calculate"/>
\$2.92 per month	\$8.75 per month	\$11.67 per month
\$35.00 per year	\$105.00 per year	\$140.02 per year

[Learn more about 2025 Referendum](#)



Mailers

A series of three direct mail pieces were sent to each household within our district's boundary. Each piece included a QR code that linked to a translated Spanish version. The mailers were strategically timed to be delivered on opposite weeks of the community YES group's mailers.

RUSD Referendum 2025 Strong Schools. Strong Community.

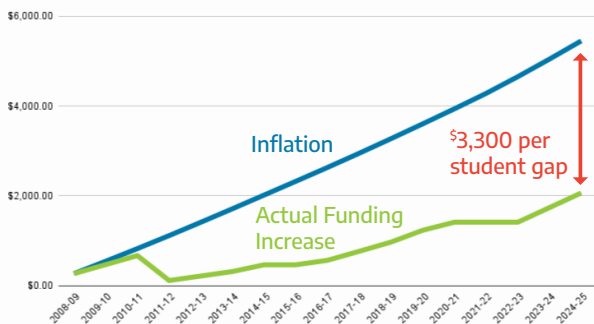
Español Aquí



On April 1, residents of the Racine Unified School District will be asked to vote on a proposed operational referendum that will impact our kids, our schools and our entire community.

Why is a referendum needed?

For more than a decade, state funding has fallen short of what it costs to meet the needs of our students. RUSD is not alone. Districts across the state have been forced to pass referendums to balance budgets. In RUSD, we have already closed schools, reduced staff and cut programs due to inadequate state funding.



Wisconsin School Funding Video



The proposed 5-year, \$190 million non-recurring referendum would:

- Prevent cutting college, career and life readiness programs like the Academies of Racine and protect smaller class sizes.
- Attract and retain high-quality teachers and staff who are essential for delivering excellent education.
- Invest in the safety and security of our schools.

Tax Impact

\$35 per year for every \$100,000 of equalized property value in our community (e.g. the owner of a \$200,000 home would see a property tax increase of \$70/year).

Vote April 1

rusd.org/referendum / [Questions? referendum@rusd.org](mailto:referendum@rusd.org)

Strong Schools. Strong Community.



Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE
PAID
Racine, Wisconsin
Permit #1623

High-quality public schools contribute to the overall community, leading to higher home values, stability in the community and a higher quality of life for residents.

The proposed 5-year, \$190 million non-recurring referendum would:

- Protect class sizes and vital programs.
- Attract and retain high-quality teachers.
- Invest in school safety and security.



Vote April 1

RUSD Referendum 2025 Strong Schools. Strong Community.

Español Aquí



On April 1, residents of the Racine Unified School District will be asked to vote on a proposed 5-year, \$190 million operational referendum that will impact our kids, our schools and our entire community.

\$190 million to be used for:

Protecting Vital Programs

- Academies of Racine
- College prep programs (AP, IB, PACC, Dual Credit)
- Early literacy programs
- Sports, fine arts, extracurriculars

Attracting and Retaining High-Quality Staff

- Classroom teachers, educational assistants, support staff
- Reading coaches
- Career, technology and other specialized staff for the Academies
- Retain staff to avoid larger class sizes

Investing in Safe Schools

- School safety staff
- Cybersecurity
- Youth Advocates
- Event safety staff
- Safety systems upgrades and maintenance



How much will property taxes increase?

\$35 per year for every \$100,000 of equalized property value in our community.

\$35	\$70
\$105	\$140

Vote April 1

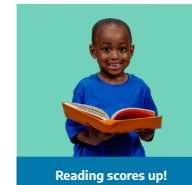
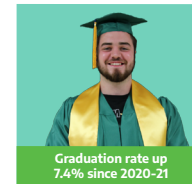
rusd.org/referendum / [Questions? referendum@rusd.org](mailto:referendum@rusd.org)

RUSD Referendum 2025 Strong Schools. Strong Community.

Español Aquí



This referendum will help RUSD maintain the **staff, class sizes and academic programs** that are leading to great outcomes, including:



Tax Impact

\$35 per year for every \$100,000 of equalized property value in our community (e.g. the owner of a \$200,000 home would see a property tax increase of \$70/year).



Vote April 1

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RUSD Referendum 2025

Strong Schools.
Strong Community.

Vote April 1.

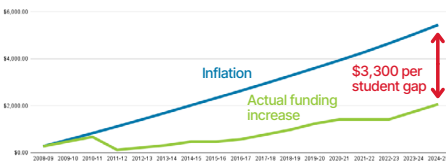
On April 1, residents of the Racine Unified School District will be asked to vote on a proposed operational referendum that will impact our schools, our students and our entire community.



Why is a referendum needed?

As a public school district, RUSD strives to ensure all students who walk through our doors have access to exceptional educational opportunities. The vast majority of our money comes from state dollars and local property taxes. But, for more than a decade, state funding has fallen short of what it costs to meet the needs of our students. RUSD is not alone. Districts across the state have been forced to pass referendums to balance budgets. In RUSD we have already closed schools, reduced staff and cut programs due to inadequate state funding.

To keep up with rising costs, RUSD will face more difficult budget challenges including a projected \$24 million budget deficit for the 2025-26 fiscal year alone. Without a successful referendum, RUSD will be forced to make difficult decisions that will impact class size, staffing, programs and school safety initiatives.



Tax Impact

If approved, this operational referendum it would have an estimated initial property tax impact of \$35 per year every \$100,000 of equalized property value in our community. For example, the owner of a home worth \$200,000 would see a property tax increase of \$70 per year.

Questions?
referendum@rusd.org



Wisconsin
School
Funding
Explained

What the Referendum Will Fund

If approved by voters, the referendum would enable the district to increase its revenue limit by \$190 million over five years allowing RUSD to:

- Protect class sizes and vital programs, including the Academies of Racine
- Attract and retain high-quality teachers and staff who are essential for delivering excellent education
- Invest in the safety and security of our schools



www.rusd.org/referendum

Referendum Fact Sheet

RUSD Referendum 2025 Strong Schools. Strong Community.

On April 1, residents of the Racine Unified School District will be asked to vote on a proposed 5-year, \$190M operational referendum that will impact our kids, our schools and our entire community.



\$100M: Protecting Vital Programs

- Academies of Racine, college prep programs (AP, IB, PACC, Dual Credit), early literacy programs and more.



\$45M: Attracting and Retaining High-Quality Staff

- Teachers, educational assistants, reading coaches
- Specialized staff for the Academies
- Retain staff to avoid larger class sizes



\$25M: Investing in Safe Schools

- Safety support staff
- Cybersecurity
- Youth advocates
- Event safety staff
- Safety systems upgrades and maintenance



\$20M: Other Expenditures

- Student supports
- Transportation
- Athletics
- Extra-curriculars

**VOTE
APRIL 1**

These numbers are estimates based on projections.
Visit rusd.org/referendum for more information.



Detailed Funding Breakdown

RUSD Referendum 2025 Strong Schools. Strong Community.



On April 1, residents of the Racine Unified School District will be asked to vote on a proposed 5-year, \$190 million operational referendum that will impact our kids, our schools and our entire community.

\$190 million will be used for:

Protecting Vital Programs

- Academies of Racine
- College prep programs (AP, IB, PACC, Dual Credit)
- Early literacy programs
- Sports, fine arts, extracurriculars

Attracting and Retaining High-Quality Staff

- Classroom teachers, educational assistants, support staff
- Reading coaches
- Career, technology and other specialized staff for the Academies
- Retain staff to avoid larger class sizes

Investing in Safe Schools

- School safety staff
- Cybersecurity
- Youth Advocates
- Event safety staff
- Safety systems upgrades and maintenance



How much will property taxes increase?

\$35 per year for every \$100,000 of equalized property value in our community.

\$100,000	\$35	\$200,000	\$70
\$300,000	\$105	\$400,000	\$140

Vote April 1

Learn more at rusd.org/referendum
Questions? referendum@rusd.org

Backpack Flyer

RUSD Referendum 2025 Strong Schools. Strong Community.



Attract and retain high-quality teachers
Protect class sizes and programs • Invest in school safety

Vote April 1



Change to taxes if the referendum is approved:

Property value Tax increase

\$100,000	\$35
\$200,000	\$70
\$300,000	\$105
\$400,000	\$140

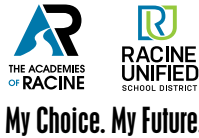
Property Tax Business Cards



Print



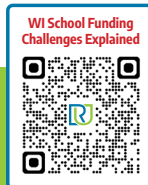
Funding for the Future of Racine's Workforce



On April 1, residents of the Racine Unified School District will be asked to vote on a proposed operational referendum that will impact our schools, our students and our entire community.

A successful referendum would allow RUSD to:

- Protect the Academies of Racine and partnerships with local businesses that are building Racine's future workforce.
- Continue offering programming that is attractive to young families who stimulate the economy.
- Attract and retain specialized teachers and staff to support the Academy Pathways.
- Protect home values. (better schools = higher property values)
- Invest in the safety and security of our schools.



VOTE APRIL 1

Learn about the referendum at rusd.org/referendum

Chamber of Commerce Magazine Ad

Come grow with us!

- State report card up for second straight year
- Reading scores climbing
- Graduation rate at a 15-year high



rusd.org/enroll



RUSD Referendum 2025 Strong Schools. Strong Community.



On April 1, residents of the Racine Unified School District will be asked to vote on a proposed operational referendum that will impact our kids, our schools and our entire community. A successful referendum will allow us to:

Invest in school safety • Protect class sizes and programs
Attract and retain high-quality teachers

How much will property taxes increase?

The referendum would have an estimated initial property tax impact of \$35 per year every \$100,000 of equalized property value in our community.

\$35	\$70
\$105	\$140

Vote April 1

Learn more at rusd.org/referendum



Local Magazine Ads



Yard Signs



Earned Media

RUSD seeking voter approval of five-year, \$190M referendum

Ryan Patterson Mar 12, 2025 17

RACINE — Community members recently heard information about the Racine Unified School District's upcoming **five-year, \$190 million** nonrecurring operational referendum.

The referendum question is on ballots in the April 1 election, and the result could play a critical role in the district's future.

Referendum background

An operational referendum helps cover expenses associated with running a school district. It is different from a capital referendum, which funds building construction.

Operational referendum money cannot be spent to renovate a building, and capital referendum dollars cannot be spent on school operations.

RUSD, for example, cannot use its 2020 capital referendum money to help cover projected deficits.

During a March 4 referendum forum hosted by the district's **Parent Leadership**

[Racine Journal Times Web Article](#)

- [RUSD Board approves putting \\$190M referendum on April ballots](#)
- [Racine Unified's \\$190 million referendum: What voters need to know](#)
- [Racine Unified faces uncertainty if U.S. Department of Education is eliminated Superintendent Soren Gajewski discusses referendum on WGTD](#)
- [Racine parents consider \\$190 million school referendum](#)
- [Letter to the Editor: Former RUSD superintendent says the April 1 referendum is critical for student success](#)
- [Letter to the Editor: Voting yes on the RUSD referendum is the smartest move you'll make this year](#)
- [Early voting begins: \\$190 million RUSD referendum on ballot in Racine](#)
- [Why a Racine referendum reflects Wisconsin school money woes](#)
- [Racine Unified referendum: Voters say yes to \\$190M lifeline in April 1 referendum](#)
- [Racine voters pass \\$190 million school referendum to maintain class sizes and safety upgrades](#)

Racine parents consider \$190 million school referendum



[NBC TMJ 4 Video Segment](#)

Early voting begins: \$190 million RUSD referendum on ballot in Racine

The Racine Unified School District is asking voters to approve a \$190 million referendum



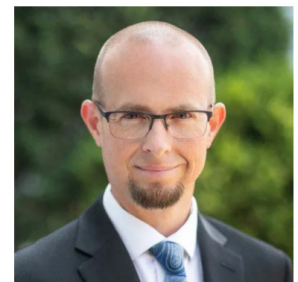
[ABC WISN 12 Video Segment](#)

Racine Unified's \$190 million referendum: What voters need to know

by Denise Lockwood February 7th, 2025

At a Racine Founder's Rotary Club meeting Friday morning, [Racine Unified School District](#) (RUSD) Superintendent [Soren Gajewski](#) delivered a stark warning to community leaders and business professionals:

"Without additional funding, Racine classrooms will be more crowded, teachers will be stretched thinner, and critical programs could be cut," he said.



Soren Gajewski, Racine Unified School District's new Superintendent. - Credit: LinkedIn

[Racine County Eye Web Article](#)