

School District of West Salem

Referendum 2018

What You Need to Know

The School District of West Salem will host a referendum on November 6, 2018 seeking permission to exceed the state-imposed revenue limit for the purpose of funding district operating expenses. While nearly every school district in the Coulee Region has hosted and passed referenda, in some cases several referenda, to exceed the revenue limit, this is the first such referendum for the School District of West Salem.

Revenue limit controls were established in 1993 as part of a comprehensive state plan to restructure school finance. The plan included a provision requiring school districts to host referenda seeking permission to exceed the limit. In the 25 years since, Wisconsin school districts have hosted nearly 1200 referenda seeking permission to exceed the limit. The School District of West Salem has thus far escaped the need for such a referendum due to efficiency, consistent property growth, and consistent enrollment growth. Recent changes to the revenue limit further restricting revenue growth combined with a more stable student enrollment have resulted in very little new revenue for the school district over the past six school years.

Therefore, the school district is now seeking voter permission to exceed the revenue limit. The West Salem community has consistently high expectations for our school district. The community desires excellent programming at an affordable price. The School District of West Salem delivers!

If voters approve of the referendum on November 6, 2018, the additional funding provided will be used to continue funding the many excellent district programs and services. If the referendum fails, the district will be tasked with cutting approximately \$1,000,000 from the budget during the upcoming 2019 – 2020 budget cycle.

A Community Decision

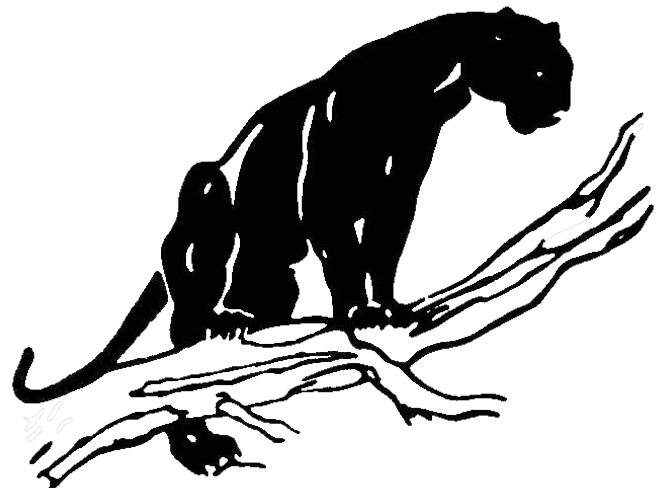
A referendum to exceed the revenue limit is truly a community decision. Much like the recent referenda for the purpose of renovating and constructing facilities, the upcoming referendum to exceed the revenue limit requires agreement around a collective commitment. It requires agreement regarding the programming and services we offer our children. On November 6, voters will again have the opportunity to weigh in on our community commitment to “Serving with Passion...”

Referendum Question

The district is seeking permission to exceed the state-imposed revenue limit by:

\$1,600,000 in 2020
\$1,900,000 in 2021
\$2,115,000 in 2022
\$2,020,000 in 2023

SDWS has never hosted a referendum seeking permission to exceed the revenue limit.



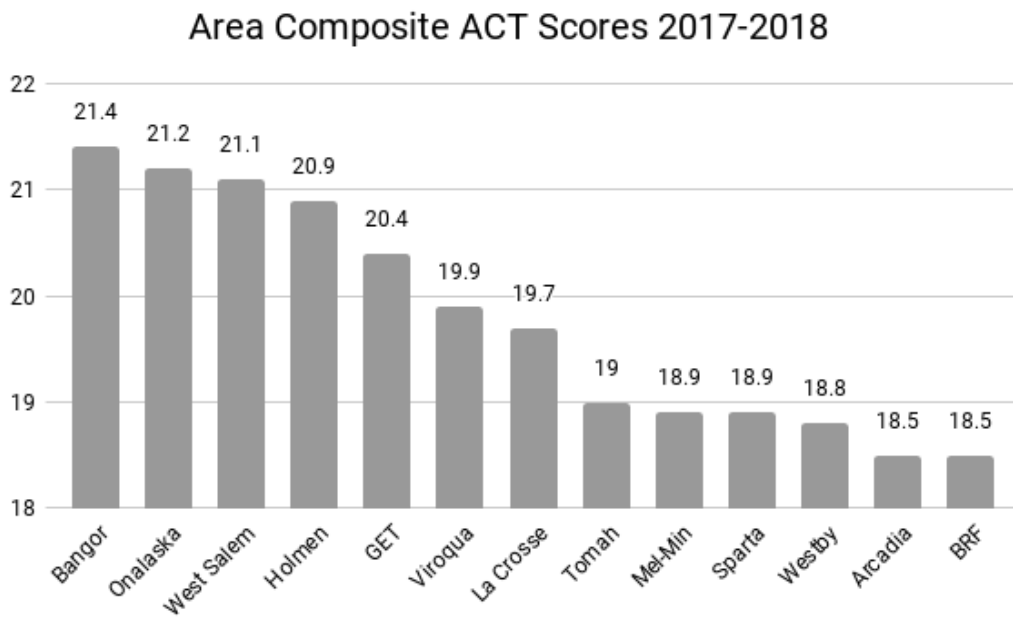
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Serving with Passion to Ignite Creativity, Innovation and Excellence



The School District of West Salem is quite literally one of the premier school districts in the Coulee Region and in the State of Wisconsin. In 2017, the district was the only school district in the Coulee Region in which every school building was ranked as Exceeding Expectations* by the state. In fact, West Salem Elementary School is a 2017 National Blue Ribbon School of Excellence and boasts of a National Gold Medal of Distinction Award Winning School Nutrition Program. Our middle and high schools are regional leaders in college and career readiness

with acclaimed senior capstone projects, vocational training programs, co-curricular activities, access to technology, and academic performance. In fact, recently released ACT scores for the graduating Class of 2018 reveal West Salem as continually performing at the top compared to other schools in our area*. Finally, the recent news story of our high school students “serving with passion” to help area flood victims with donations and physical labor is testament to the district commitment to living our mission by literally “serving with passion.”



*Source: Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction



Budgets

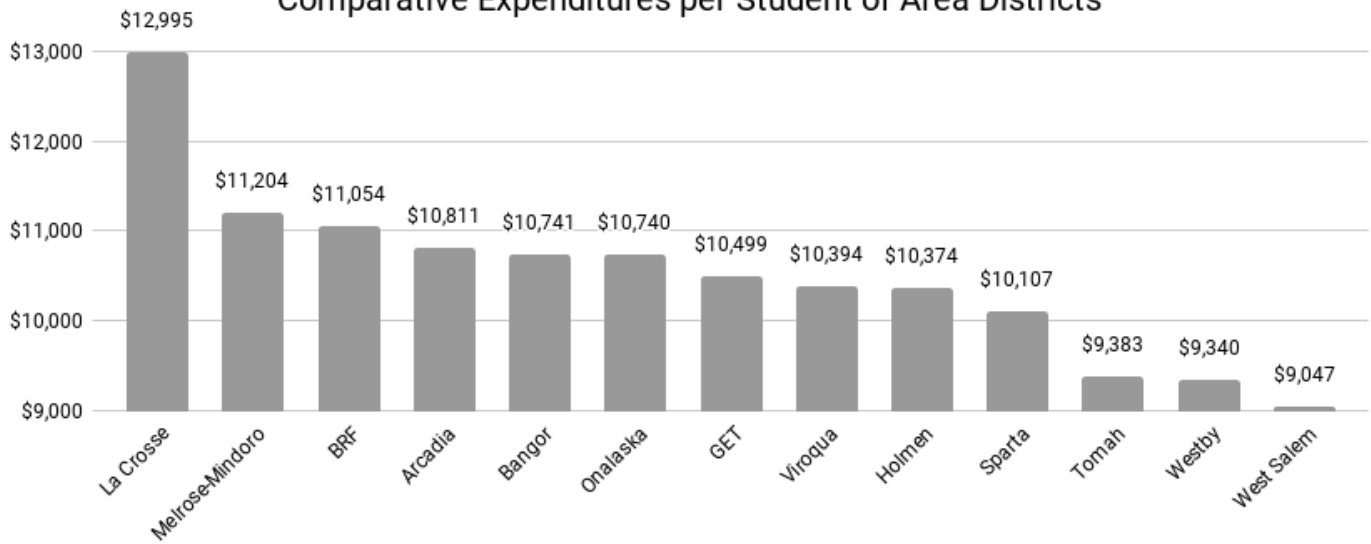
As noted earlier, the revenue limit has resulted in very little increase in district revenue over the past 5 years. In fact, the revenue limit amount in 2012 – 2013 was \$15,990,652 and the amount for 2018 – 2019 is \$16,131,380. During this time period, the district balanced the budget with reductions to employee benefits, stagnant wages, and delays in equipment purchasing and maintenance items. The 2018 – 2019 budget cycle marked a breaking point as enrollment demands and facility changes required additional staff while the need to offer regionally competitive compensation packages resulted in wage increases. The results have placed the school board in the position of asking for permission to exceed the limit, or beginning the process of cutting programs and services. We are at that point.

As evidence of the board’s stewardship of taxpayer dollars, the Wisconsin Policy Institute offers data regarding “Education-Related Expenses.” As the following chart indicates, the School District of West Salem spends less per student than all other area school districts.

If the referendum passes, the school board will continue to “serve with passion” by funding the excellent programs and services we offer our students. The district will continue to attract and retain highly-qualified personnel to carry out our mission and serve our students. The board will restore funding for the regular purchasing of equipment and resume planning for long-term maintenance items such as roof replacement and infrastructure updates. More importantly, the board will recapture their focus on student achievement, on producing career and college graduates, and on providing outstanding value for parents and taxpayers.

If the referendum fails, the school board will begin the process of trimming \$1,000,000 from the 2019 – 2020 school budget. In consideration of what has already been trimmed from the budget, a reduction of this size will require a significant reduction in services and staffing. Our students will have fewer choices, will attend school in classrooms with more students, and will receive fewer services, while needed updates and repairs to district equipment will be delayed.

Comparative Expenditures per Student of Area Districts



Property Taxes

No referendum discussion is complete without an honest discussion about property taxes. The School District of West Salem tax rate has decreased steadily from 2014 through 2018. In fact the chart below shows the property taxes paid to the school district by a particular property valued at approximately \$180,000 in the Town of Barre* over the past 5 years.

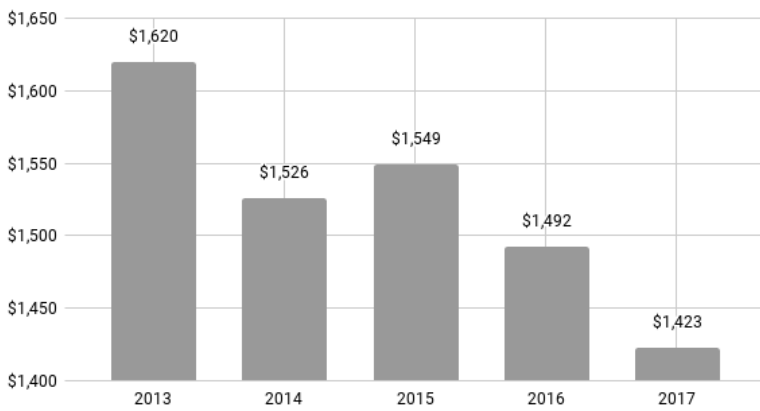
Looking forward, the levy rate or “Mill Rate” will be set at \$8.93 per \$1,000 worth of property or \$893 per year on each \$100,000 worth of property owned in 2019. If the referendum passes on November 6th, it is anticipated the school district Mill Rate will increase to \$9.74 per \$1,000 beginning with the 2020 tax year and remain at this level for the entire four year period (2020 – 2023) covered by the referendum. This amounts to an \$81 annual increase for each \$100,000 worth of property. For example, the expected increase for the previously noted property in Barre

is \$145.00 per year, which will total less than that homeowner paid in 2013.

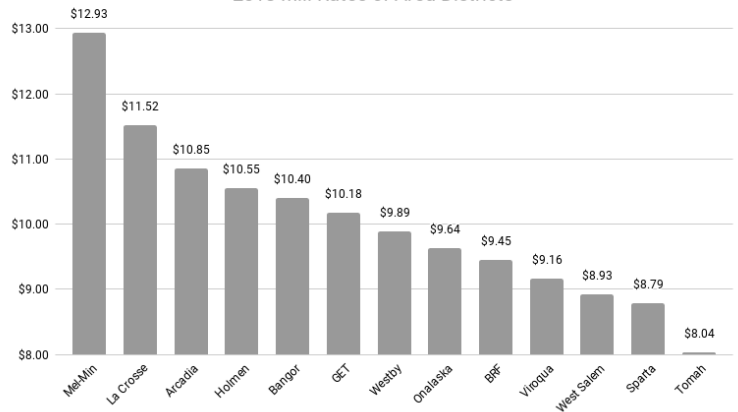
If the referendum fails, it is anticipated the Mill Rate will decrease to \$8.18 beginning in 2020 saving approximately \$75 per year for each \$100,000 worth of property or \$135 per year for the noted property in Barre.

As a point of information, the average school district Mill Rate in the Coulee Region is \$10.12, the average school district Mill Rate in the State of Wisconsin is \$9.77, and the twenty year average Mill Rate for the School District of West Salem is \$9.74. According to the La Crosse County Zoning Department, the lowest overall property tax rates in La Crosse County are found within the School District of West Salem in the Towns of Medary, Barre, Bangor, Shelby, Hamilton, and in the Village of West Salem.

School Taxes for \$180,000 Property in Barre Mills



2018 Mill Rates of Area Districts



*Source: La Crosse County Zoning Department



District Survey



In the district survey completed in the fall of 2015, district residents offered input regarding the future of district facilities. The school board channeled that input into a series of upgrades to a number of district facilities. All accomplished while lowering the tax rate – well done! The same survey indicated our community places a priority on producing college and career ready graduates,

recruiting and retaining quality employees, maintaining facilities, remaining current with technology, and offering quality programs. This list is funded through the district operational budget. The school board is now seeking your consideration regarding the continued funding of these concepts, programs, and services.

Voting Information

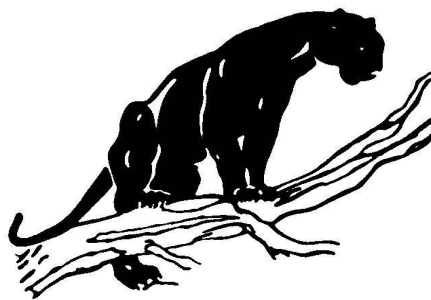
Information as to the location of the polling places is available in the District Office. All polling places will be open at 7:00 a.m. and will close at 8:00 p.m. If you have any questions concerning your polling place, contact the municipal clerk:

<p>Dawn Faherty Town of Bangor N4400 State Road 162 Bangor, WI 54614 (hall) N3685 County Rd J Rockland, WI 54653 608-769-1185 (home)</p>
<p>Jane Esser Town of Burns W1313 Jewett Rd. Bangor, WI 54614 (hall) N7267 Christopherson Coulee Rd. Bangor, WI 54614 (home) 608-486-4159 (home) 608-486-4272 (hall)</p>
<p>Lois Meinking Town of Greenfield N1800 Town Hall Rd. La Crosse, WI 54601 (hall) W2775 Sherry Lane, Apt #6 La Crosse, WI 54601 (home) 608-788-8285 (home) 608-787-0400 (hall)</p>
<p>Diane Elsen Town of Medary N3393 Smith Valley Rd. La Crosse, WI 54601 (hall) 608-781-2275 (hall) Town Hall Hours (T 8-11; Th 3-6; Fri 8-11)</p>
<p>Barb Muenzenberger Town of Washington W1430 County Rd H (Newburgs Corner) W561 Muenzenberger Rd. Coon Valley, WI 54623 (home) 608-486-2297 (home)</p>

<p>Lynette Schomberg Town of Barre W3541 County Rd M La Crosse, WI 54601 (hall) N3806 Old Cty Rd M West Salem, WI 54669 (home) 608-797-6375 (home)</p>
<p>Betty Sacia Town of Farmington N8309 County Road C Mindoro, WI (hall) W5735 County Rd V Holmen, WI 54636 (home) 608-526-3506 (home) 608-857-3913 (hall)</p>
<p>Sara Schultz Town of Hamilton N5105 N Leonard St. West Salem, WI 54669 (hall) W3501 Pleasant Valley Rd. West Salem, WI 54669 (home) 608-786-1516 (home) 608-786-0989 (hall)</p>
<p>Michelle Kind Town of Shelby Annex - 2801 Ward Ave. La Crosse, WI 54601 608-788-1032, Ext. 7 (hall) Town Hall Hours (M-F: 8-4; T 4-6)</p>
<p>Teresa Schnitzler Village of West Salem Community Center 175 S Leonard St. West Salem, WI 54669 Village Hall Hours (M-F: 8-4:45) 608-786-1858 (hall)</p>

**School District of West Salem
405 East Hamlin Street
West Salem, WI 54669**

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Vote November 6

The school district referendum will contain one question, reading as follows:
“Shall the School District of West Salem, La Crosse County, Wisconsin be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by \$1,600,000 for the 2019-2020 school year, by \$1,900,000 for the 2020-2021 school year, by \$2,115,000 for the 2021-2022 school year and by \$2,020,000 for the 2022-2023 school year, for non-recurring purposes consisting of maintaining educational programming and facilities?”

For more information, and a video on this referendum, please visit our website at <http://www.wsalem.k12.wi.us/content/our-district/referendum>

This document is not intended to advocate that you vote for or against the referendum, but instead is intended to inform you about the facts about the referendum.