

APRIL 5, 2011 REFERENDUM INFORMATION

All information is available electronically at www.fortschools.org



Frequently Asked Questions

QUICK FACTS:

- ✓ The district is seeking continuation of the current referendum at the same level of support - not an increase
- ✓ The district has already made substantial cuts - over a million dollars in the past year
- ✓ This referendum will sunset in three years
- ✓ Continuation of the same level of support is critical at this time to maintain our high quality programs and services

Do you have additional questions?

- ◆ Please visit our webpage at www.fortschools.org
- ◆ Call the district office 563-7807
- ◆ E-mail Dr. Fitzpatrick, Superintendent, at jfitz@fortschools.org

What cuts or reductions has the school district already made?

Throughout the last 5 year referendum, the district has made cuts and identified efficiency opportunities. Just in the last year, the district has reduced its spending by over a million dollars through cuts and efficiencies. All of these reductions have been accomplished while preserving programs and services as promised to the voters during the last referendum.

How has the district raised revenues for operating expenses since the last referendum?

By being a school of choice in the area, the district raises its available revenues by nearly three-quarters of a million dollars annually through the open enrollment program. This raised revenue is one reason we are able to come back to our voters without asking for an increase on this referendum.

How much will the referendum cost a home owner?

If passed, the referendum amount will remain at the same level of support as currently provided. Individual tax assessments vary with home value; however, the amount requested by the school district through referendum will not have increased from 2006 through 2014.

If this referendum doesn't pass, will the district come back to the voters? What will that referendum look like?

If the April 2011 referendum does not pass, the Board of Education will need to determine when to return to voters. The opportunity to stay at the same level of support will be lost, and the next referendum amount will be significantly higher and may still require cuts to programs and services.

What will the School District of Fort Atkinson look like if the referendum doesn't pass?

If the referendum doesn't pass, the Board of Education will be forced to begin dismantling our current educational system. The loss of \$694,000 annually would force us to make difficult reductions in programs and services, increased class sizes as well as further cuts to employee compensation packages.

Why does the district need this money when the Governor says you have the tools to balance your budget without a referendum?

The vast majority of the Governor's new tools center on the reduction of employee compensation and benefit packages. Fort Atkinson has already been utilizing some of these tools for quite some time. Our current health insurance premiums are lower than the State plan that is proposed, and our employees have been paying a larger share of their premiums, as compared to other districts, for many years. Fort Atkinson will utilize other tools provided by the Governor while being mindful of staying competitive with area schools to continue recruiting and retaining high quality teachers and staff.

Why not postpone the referendum until all of the State figures and new tools are known?

Time is money at this point. By continuing the current level of support, we are able to maintain current programs and services for three more years. Throughout this time period, we will explore and utilize the Governor's tools to strategically implement a budget in the best interests of our students and taxpayers. If this referendum doesn't pass, the opportunity to preserve programs and services for the next three years will be lost.

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OUR MISSION

The School District of Fort Atkinson is committed to delivering the quality opportunities and services each student needs to achieve his or her academic and personal potential

Visit us on the web!
www.fortschools.org

What exactly is “collective bargaining” and how does it impact the finances of the district?

Collective bargaining is a type of negotiation used by employees to work with their employers. Through collective bargaining, the district and workers' representatives together negotiate a contract which includes wages, benefits and working conditions. With over 80% of our annual budget tied to employee costs, collective bargaining has a large impact on district finances. In addition to the fiscal impact, collective bargaining ultimately represents the partnership between the district and its employee groups working together to achieve our mission.

How was the federal jobs bill money spent?

The district has banked its one-time federal jobs money. It will be used to offset anticipated deficits within the next three years. Our fiscal prudence in saving this money is another reason why we are currently able to come back to voters asking for the same level of referendum support for three additional years.

Is there a savings now with so many veteran teachers retiring?

The district will incur savings due to a higher than anticipated number of retirements. Recurring savings from retirements due to lower replacement costs are offset by the cost of ongoing retirement benefits for the retiree. This savings will not be substantial enough to eliminate our need for the referendum.

Does Fort Atkinson choose to do any “extra programs” that other districts don’t do that we could do without?

Fort Atkinson currently provides a comprehensive school system that includes AP courses, music and art programs, varied sports opportunities, etc. If we began to eliminate these, we risk losing current open enrollment families and Fort Atkinson families to other school districts, as well as the revenue from their choice to attend here. We also lose much of what this community has so highly valued in our schools.

Are the green energy initiatives really saving the district money or, for now, just costing the district more money?

All of the green energy initiatives implemented by the district are done to ultimately save the district recurring expenses in relation to energy costs. Any initial costs are incurred knowing that future taxpayers will reap the benefits of the increased savings.

BUDGET FACTS

The following information is a simplified summary of the effects of the proposed budget repair bill and State budget on the School District of Fort Atkinson as it relates to our continued need for the referendum.

ALL ELSE =	
<u>Budget Repair Bill</u>	<u>2011-13 State Budget</u>
50% of Pension = \$840,000	Reduction of 5.5% Per Student = -\$545
12.6% of Health = \$100,000	2,775 Students x -\$545 = -\$1,512,375
District Cost Savings = \$940,000	\$940,000
	Gap to Make Up With Referendum <u>-\$572,375</u>
	April, 2011 Referendum Amount <u>-\$694,000</u>
	Gap Without Referendum <u>-\$1,266,375</u>