SCHOOL DISTRICT OF LADYSMITH
2026 REFERENDUM NEWSLETTER

A Message To Our Community

This November, voters in the School District of Ladysmith will be asked to consider a non-recurring operational referendum that would provide the District with $950,000 annually for five years, beginning next school year.

For many residents, the first question is simple: **why?**

The answer starts with how public schools are funded in Wisconsin. The revenue limit formula restricts the amount of revenue school districts can raise through state general aid and local property taxes. Voter-approved operational referendums can provide additional revenue limit authority. While the cost of educating students continues to increase, district revenues have not kept pace. Rural districts face an additional challenge: when enrollment declines, funding often declines as well.

For our district, these pressures have been building for several years. The District's current operational referendum, which provides $600,000 annually, expires at the end of this school year. In addition, federal COVID relief funding that supported school operations has ended. Those two changes represent nearly one million dollars in annual revenue that will no longer be available moving forward.

Like families and businesses throughout our community, schools have experienced higher costs for transportation, utilities, insurance, technology, supplies, and employee benefits. Student needs have also increased, requiring additional support services and specialized programming. These challenges are not unique to Ladysmith. Districts throughout Wisconsin continue to face similar financial pressures, which is why operational referendums have become increasingly common across the state.

The question our District brings forward on **November 3, 2026** is not about expanding programs or constructing new facilities. It is about whether the District will have the resources needed to maintain educational opportunities, student support services, transportation, and day-to-day operations that students rely on today.

TOTAL PROPOSED REFERENDUM

$950,000 *for 5 years*

$600,000
Replaces the District's current operational referendum

$350,000
Additional amount needed to address rising costs

ESTIMATED TAX IMPACT

AN ADDITIONAL $10 FOR EVERY $100,000 OF EQUALIZED PROPERTY VALUE

Instruction — Transportation — Maintenance



SUPPORTS DAY-TO-DAY OPERATIONS

NO FUNDING *for new buildings or renovation projects*



OUR RESPONSE

Over the past several years, the District has taken several steps to control costs and improve efficiency before asking taxpayers to consider additional funding. These actions have included both immediate reductions and long-term cost containment strategies.



Administrative Reductions

The district consolidated middle and high school administration, reducing two positions to one. A district office position was left unfilled, with existing staff taking on additional responsibilities to maintain services.



Staffing Adjustments

Through attrition and position management, the district reduced classroom staffing positions while working to minimize impact on student learning.



Shared Services and Staff

The District partnered with neighboring school systems to share services and expertise where practical, reducing duplication and improving efficiency.



Delayed Spending

Several maintenance projects were postponed in order to prioritize immediate operational needs. Technology replacement schedules were also extended to get additional use from devices and equipment.



Insurance Changes

Employee insurance plans were adjusted to help manage rapidly increasing healthcare costs.

While these efforts have produced savings, there is a limit to how much a school district can reduce spending without impacting students. Unlike many organizations, schools must continue to provide transportation, special education services, student support, safety measures, academic programming, and facility operations regardless of financial conditions.

The proposed referendum would allow the District to avoid deeper cuts that could directly affect students and families.

COMMUNITY INPUT

In May 2026, residents reviewed several potential operational referendum options through a community survey. The five-year, non-recurring **$950,000** option received the strongest support.

If Passed	If Failed
Provides **$950,000 per year for five years** starting next school year.	Need to consider budget reductions and other financial measures, and likely return to voters in Spring 2027.
Helps stabilize the budget and maintain current programs, services, and operations.	Potential impacts could include: • Staff reductions and larger classes. • Fewer course offerings and services. • Delayed maintenance. • Higher borrowing costs. • Lower reserves.

OR

VOTER CHECKLIST

- ○ **Registration**
  Make sure you are registered at your current address. Register, update your information, or check your status at **myvote.wi.gov**

- ○ **Polling Place**
  Your voting location is based on your home address. Enter your address on **MyVote WI** to find where to vote. Polls are open on **November 3, 2026, 7:00 AM to 8:00 PM**.

- ○ **Photo ID**
  Wisconsin requires an acceptable photo ID (driver's license, state ID, passport, military ID).

- ○ **Absentee Voting**
  Request an absentee ballot, check early voting options, or track your ballot on **MyVote WI**.



Questions?
Contact your local municipal clerk or **scan the QR code** to visit **MyVote WI** for official election information.

#GoLadysmith

SCHOOL DISTRICT OF
LADYSMITH
1700 Edgewood Ave E
Ladysmith, WI 54848

NONPROFIT ORG
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
LADYSMITH, WI
PERMIT NO. 4

ECRWSS
POSTAL CUSTOMER

You are invited!

Community Meetings

Save These Dates



Attend an informational meeting to learn more about the operational referendum and make an informed decision!

Tuesday, October 6, 2026
High School Auditorium
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

Tuesday, October 20, 2026
High School Auditorium
6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

ladysmith.k12.wi.us/referendum

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