

PRESS RELEASE

Voters Approve 92% of School Budgets, All Additional Questions

- *41 New Jersey districts to elect school board members on April 16*
- *39 districts to also vote on proposed 'base budgets'*
- *4 districts approve 'second' questions for spending outside the base budget*
- *4 districts approve school-construction referendums*

TRENTON, April 17, 2013—Voters approved 36 of the 39 local school budgets on Tuesday's annual school election, according to preliminary results collected by the New Jersey School Boards Association. Besides approving 92 percent of the 39 school districts' base budgets, voters also approved all second ballot questions and construction proposals.

Legislation enacted last year allows communities to decide whether to hold their school elections on the third Tuesday of April or during the General Election in November. A total of 501 communities will hold school board member elections in November this year. The law eliminates the requirement that voters in November act on the school district's proposed budget as long as it remains at or below the state's 2-percent levy cap.

This year, 41 school districts held April elections. Two of those districts, Newark and Paterson, are state operated and voters in those cities select school board members but do not act on the proposed budget. In the other 39 districts, voters elect board members and act on the budget. Overall, there were 163 candidates on the ballot to fill 119 seats.

Base Budget questions The "base budget" funds the district's operations for the coming school year. Voters approved 36 of the 39 proposed state budgets, and rejected budgets only in Belleville in Essex County, North Bergen in Hudson County, and Edison in Middlesex County.

Second questions Four school districts proposed questions to spend outside the base budget. Often called “second questions,” these proposals must cite a program, position or purchase to be funded and must indicate if it represents a recurring or a one-time expense. Voters approved all second-question proposals on the ballot this year. They were proposed in the following school districts: Wood-Ridge in Bergen County; Secaucus in Hudson County; the School District of the Chathams in Morris County (which proposed two additional ballot questions); and Greenwich Township in Warren County.

Construction proposals The April school election also serves as one of five dates during the year when school boards may ask voters to approve construction proposals. All four construction proposals were approved by voters. They were proposed in East Rutherford and Midland Park (both in Bergen County); Franklin Township (Gloucester County); and Pequannock (Morris County).

Rejected budget and second-ballot questions When voters reject the base budget, the proposal is reviewed by the municipal governing body, which may make cuts or leave the budget intact. A school board may apply to the state commissioner of education for restoration of a municipality’s cuts to a defeated base budget, but only if the cuts would prevent the school district from providing an adequate education or if it would undermine the district’s financial stability. Such budget appeals are rare; there were none over the past two years and one in 2010.

SUMMARY OF ADDITIONAL BALLOT FINANCE QUESTIONS (“Second Ballot Questions”)

Four school districts posed additional budget questions to voters, asking for spending outside of the base budget, or to exceed to the state-imposed 2-percent cap on the tax levy:

- **Wood-Ridge** (Bergen County) – \$500,000 for staffing and operational costs associated with the opening of the intermediate schools. – **Approved**
- **Secaucus** (Hudson County) – \$175,000 for security personnel in each of the district’s schools. – **Approved**

- **School District of the Chathams** (Morris County) –
 - *Proposal 1:* \$240,000 for counselors in the elementary and middle schools.– **Approved**
 - *Proposal 2:* \$225,000 for a security personnel and a coordinator of district security.– **Approved**
- **Greenwich Township** (Warren County): \$670,000 to maintain existing staff, including art and music teachers, physical education teachers and guidance counselors. – **Approved**

Each of the proposals will result in a permanent increase in the district’s budget.

SUMMARY OF BOND REFERENDUM QUESTIONS

Total amount requested: \$7,167,515

BERGEN COUNTY

East Rutherford – Approved

Renovations to Faust School, including roof and window replacement, electrical and masonry repairs, and asbestos abatement.

Total amount: \$530,000

Midland Park – Approved

Partial roof replacement

Total amount: \$955,075

GLOUCESTER COUNTY

Franklin Township – Approved

Renovations to replace roof and upgrade the heating/ventilation/air condition system at the Janvier Elementary School.

Total amount: \$2,332,440

MORRIS COUNTY

Pequannock – Approved

Construction of a gym addition at the Gerace Elementary School, including new parking, entrance, bathroom facilities and gymnasium.

Total amount: \$3,350,000

School Districts Where Voters Approved Base Budgets

Bergen County: Cliffside Park, East Rutherford, Emerson, Englewood, Fairview, Garfield, Hackensack, Harrington Park, Midland Park, Norwood, Oakland, Palisades Park, Ramsey, Ridgewood, Wood-Ridge

Cumberland County: Bridgeton

Essex County: Irvington

Gloucester County: Delsea Regional, Franklin

Hudson County: Secaucus, Weehawken

Middlesex County: Cranbury, Metuchen, New Brunswick

Monmouth County: Neptune Township

Morris County: Chatham, Mendham Township, Mountain Lakes, Pequannock, Riverdale, Rockaway Borough

Passaic County: Hawthorne, Passaic, Totowa

Warren County: Allamuchy, Greenwich

School Districts Where Voters Rejected Base Budgets

Essex County: Belleville

Hudson County: North Bergen

Source: New Jersey School Boards Association