

OPERATIONAL REFERENDUM



WUSD Operational Referendum Key Messages - March 2026

The Watertown Unified School District is facing serious financial challenges. State funding has not kept pace with the rising costs to operate the district. The cost of everyday expenses such as salaries, utilities, transportation, supplies and basic building maintenance exceed the amount of revenue that the district is allowed to take in through state aid and property taxes.

Our most recent operational referendum expired in 2023. Since that time, we have relied on reserve funds to maintain stable programming and services for students. This is not sustainable long-term. Over the past year, the District has reduced expenditures by more than \$1.2 million, including staffing reductions and program adjustments. Despite these difficult and deliberate actions, we continue to face a deficit of approximately \$4.5 million annually.

Under Wisconsin law, an operational referendum is the only mechanism available to school districts to exceed revenue limits for ongoing operational expenses. This referendum is not for new construction or major capital projects. It is focused exclusively on sustaining day-to-day operations that include supporting students, keeping classrooms staffed, maintaining manageable class sizes, and preserving academic and co-curricular programming.

A strong school district helps protect property values, supports and attracts local businesses, prepares students for careers, and strengthens our community. Without this funding, the district will face deeper cuts. These cuts may lead to increased class sizes, reduced programming options and staff, and the closure of schools.

The Board of Education and district leadership remain committed to fiscal stewardship, transparency, and ongoing community engagement. All budgetary decisions are guided by our Strategic Plan, with a clear focus on sustaining educational quality while ensuring long-term financial stability.

Community members are being asked to vote on an operational referendum question for the WUSD on April 7, 2026. We encourage all members of our community to stay informed, attend informational sessions, ask questions, and participate in this important decision. Together, we can ensure that our schools remain strong, supporting students today while preserving opportunity for generations to come.

PLEASE VOTE APRIL 7, 2026!



To learn more, visit
www.watertown.k12.wi.us

