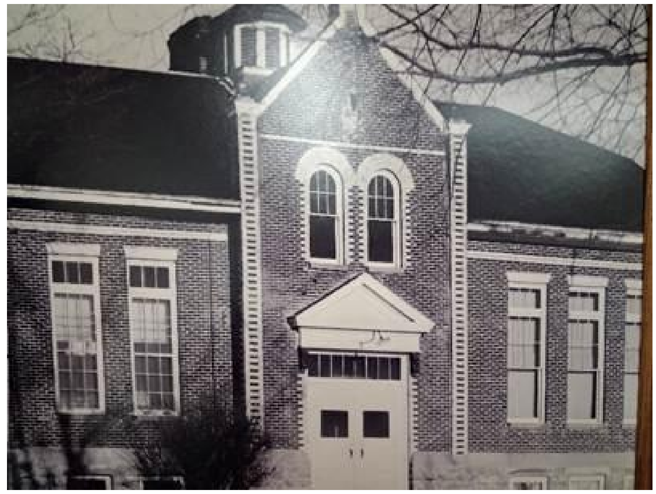
Seneca Area School District Recurring Operational Referendum



Rooted in Community, Reaching for Excellence

Important Election Information

Election date: November 3, 2026

Voters will be asked the question:

Shall the Seneca Area School District, located in Crawford County, Wisconsin, be authorized to exceed the revenue limit specified in Section 121.91, Wisconsin Statutes, by $500,000 for recurring purposes starting with the 2027-2028 school year and by an additional $470,000 for recurring purposes starting with the 2028-2029 school year, for a total recurring amount of $970,000 for purposes consisting of operational costs to maintain instructional programs, staffing, technology, transportation, and facilities management?

What Is the Referendum Asking?

The proposed recurring operational referendum would provide:

- $500,000 beginning in the 2027-2028 school year.
- An additional $470,000 beginning in the 2028-2029 school year.
- A total recurring amount of $970,000.

This is an **operating referendum**, not a capital or building referendum. The funds would support ongoing school operations rather than construction or major building projects.

Approval would create a maximum taxing authority, or ceiling. The district would not be required to levy the full amount every year. If the full amount is not needed, the district may levy less.

From the 2010-2011 school year through the 2022-2023 school year, the district set its budget and levied only what was needed when the budget allowed. The district intends to continue under-levying when circumstances permit.

Why Does Seneca Need This Referendum?

Seneca Area School District has not asked taxpayers to increase the revenue limit for 18 years. During that time, the district has managed its budget through cost-saving measures and careful financial planning. However, current operating expenses continue to place pressure on the district's savings and available resources.

The district is seeking additional recurring authority because of:

- An outdated funding formula: State-imposed revenue limits restrict the amount of funding available through state aid and local property taxes.
- State funding challenges: State-approved funding has not kept pace with inflation and rising costs in recent years.
- Increasing student needs: Mental health and special education needs have increased significantly.
- Rising operating costs: The cost of providing everyday services, including school breakfast and lunch programs, heating, transportation, technology, and building operations, continues to increase.

What We've Already Done

The district has taken a number of steps to control costs, including:

- Staffing cuts
- Changes to health insurance plans
- Minimal raises
- Early debt repayment
- Seeking external revenue, including grants

We have made every possible cut, but our operating expenses are still affecting our savings.

The proposed referendum would provide the district with additional flexibility to maintain operations while continuing to evaluate expenses and levy only what is necessary.

What Is a Mill Rate?

A mill rate is the amount of school property tax charged for every $1,000 of a property's taxable value.

The current Seneca Area School District mill rate for 2025-2026 is $5.66 per $1,000 of equalized value.

For comparison, the 2025-2026 mill rates in nearby districts are:

School District	Mill Rate
Wauzeka-Steuben	$9.92
Boscobel	$7.64
North Crawford	$7.13
Seneca	$5.66

Using the current Seneca mill rate, a home with an assessed value of $300,000 would have an estimated school tax of:

$$300{,}000 \times \frac{5.66}{1{,}000} = 1{,}698$$

Therefore, a $300,000 home currently pays approximately $1,698 in Seneca school taxes, based on the stated mill rate and assessed value.

Projected Mill Rates

Based on current financial projections, the mill rate would be approximately:

$6.09 in 2026-2027

$7.98 in 2027-2028

$8.99 in 2028-2029

Actual tax rates and individual tax bills may vary based on property values, equalized valuation, state aid, district budgeting decisions, and other factors. The referendum would establish taxing authority; it would not require the district to levy the full authorized amount if it is not needed.

Estimated Examples

Home Value	Current Rate: $5.66	Projected 2026-2027 Mill Rate: $6.09	Projected 2027-2028 Mill Rate: $7.98	Projected 2028-2029 Mill Rate: $8.99
$100,000	$566	$609	$798	$899
$300,000	$1,698	$1,827	$2,394	$2,697

Based on the projections, the estimated increase in costs compared to the current rate would be as follows:

For a $100,000 home:

- In 2026-27, approximately $43 more, which breaks down to about $3.58 per month.

- In 2027-28, approximately $189 more, equating to about $15.75 per month.

- In 2028-29, approximately $101 more, or about $8.42 per month.

For a $300,000 home**:**

- In 2026-27, approximately $129 more, which is around $10.75 per month.

- In 2027-28, approximately $567 more, equating to about $47.25 per month.

- In 2028-29, approximately $303 more, or about $25.25 per month.

These are estimates for illustration and are not individual tax statements.

What Happens If the Referendum Fails?

If the referendum is not approved on November 3, 2026, the district will survey community members to better understand their questions and concerns. The district would then seek another referendum in Spring 2027.

Without approval, budget reductions would be necessary beginning in the 2027-2028 school year. Areas that could be considered for reductions include:

- Middle School Athletics
- Extracurricular activities
- Vocational Curriculum

Any reductions would be evaluated in relation to the district's mission and its commitment to providing meaningful educational opportunities for students.

Our Mission

Our schools will strive to develop life-long learners who become productive citizens in an ever-changing society. We will facilitate this by promoting leadership, self-esteem,

achievement, and a strong work ethic in our young people.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between capital and operating referenda?

A **capital referendum** generally involves borrowing money for projects such as building construction, additions, or major renovations. Borrowed funds are repaid over time with interest.

An **operating referendum** provides authority to raise revenue for ongoing school operations. It is a pay-as-you-go approach and does not involve borrowed funds or interest payments, making it more cost-efficient for the community.

What will the money be used for?

The referendum funds would support operational costs needed to maintain:

- Instructional programs
- Staffing
- Technology

- Transportation
- Utilities & Lunch program

Learn More

Community members with questions are encouraged to:

- Contact the Seneca Area School District office.
- Visit the district website for referendum updates and additional information.
- Attend upcoming community information sessions on:
    - **Sunday, September 13th at 6:00 PM**
    - **Sunday, October 11th at 4:00 PM**
    - **Wednesday, October 28th at 6:00 PM**

The district encourages all eligible voters to review the information, ask questions, and participate in the November 3, 2026, election. Informed voting and community engagement are important to the future of Seneca Area School District students, families, staff, and residents.