

Please direct inquiries to:

Nancy Popp, District Administrator
(715) 238-7292
poppn@granton.k12.wi.us



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Granton Area School District Board Approves Operational Referendum Question for April 7 Ballot

GRANTON, WI — At its January 12th meeting, the Granton Area School District School Board approved a five-year, non-recurring operational referendum question that will appear on the ballot Tuesday, April 7, 2026.

If a simple majority approves the measure, the district will be able to exceed its revenue limit by \$1.25 million annually through the conclusion of the 2030-31 school year.

"Our community takes great pride in the quality of education we provide to our students, and an operational referendum is one way to help ensure we can sustain that reputation and service into the future," said District Administrator Nancy Popp. "The revenue generated through this referendum would allow us to continue funding academic programs, services, and activities that directly support student learning and wellbeing."

The Granton Area School District (GASD) faces the same financial challenges experienced by many Wisconsin districts. State aid to public schools has failed to keep up with inflation for decades. If state aid had kept pace with inflation since 2009, school districts like GASD would receive about \$3,500 more per student annually.

Every school district also has a revenue limit set by the state that caps the amount of money it can receive in state aid and local property taxes. This can be impacted by factors beyond a district's control like enrollment and inflation. Operational referendums are the only tool to raise a revenue limit.

GASD is projecting budget deficits in future years due to funding shortfalls. Without assistance from an operational referendum, the board and administration will need to explore budget cuts. This could include reducing staff, increasing class sizes, limiting programs and services for students, and delaying maintenance.

Operational referendums are common in Wisconsin. About 87 percent of districts have attempted them to date, and more than half of all districts have received voter approval to exceed their revenue limits in the past decade.

An approved referendum in April would have an estimated average annual school district property tax increase of \$561 for every \$100,000 of property value.

A new referendum website with information and answers to frequently asked questions will soon be launched to engage with community members. Referendum details will also be shared on social media platforms and through other communication channels ahead of election day.